

# FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

STORIES  
—OF—  
BOYS WHO MAKE  
MONEY.

**THE WAY TO SUCCESS;  
OR, THE BOY WHO GOT THERE.**

*By A SELF-MADE MAN.*  
AND OTHER STORIES



The flames were already reaching for them. He tied the rope securely around his waist, stepped out on the sill, and measured with his eye the distance he proposed to jump. Then, nerving himself for the effort, he leaped upward.







# Fame and Fortune Weekly

## STORIES OF BOYS WHO MAKE MONEY

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# The Way to Success

—OR—

## THE BOY WHO GOT THERE

By A SELF-MADE MAN

### CHAPTER I.

#### INTRODUCES JACK FROST AND THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH HE LIVES.

"Supper is ready, Jack," said a pleasant-faced little woman of perhaps five-and-thirty years, standing in the kitchen doorway of a small, neat-looking farmhouse, to a strong and good-looking boy who had just driven a light wagon into the yard.

"All right, auntie," replied the boy, in the cheery tone habitual with him, "I'll be ready just as soon as I put the horse in the stable."

The lad continued on to the barn, unharnessed the animal, and led her to her stall.

"You look a bit heated, old girl," he said, patting her affectionately on her sleek neck. "I guess I won't feed you until after I've had my supper."

Then he went to the wagon, took out an armful of packages, crossed the yard and entered the house.

Jack Frost was an orphan and just sixteen years of age.

Born and educated in the East, the sudden and tragic death of both his parents in a steamboat disaster on Long Island Sound threw him, on the eve of his fifteenth birthday, practically penniless upon his own resources.

In this strait he gladly accepted an invitation from his mother's only sister, Lucy, who, years before, married an enterprising man named Frank Harper, and moved out West, to come to Wisconsin and make their farm his home. He had been there but a couple of months, and was fast learning to make himself useful, when Mr. Harper caught a severe cold, which developed into pneumonia and carried him to his grave.

In this emergency Jack came to the front, and proved himself a bulwark of strength and consolation to his bereaved aunt.

With a degree of confidence unusual in one so young, he took the management of the farm entirely upon his young shoulders, hired a competent and trustworthy assistant, and, much to the surprise of the neighboring agriculturists, carried the work on in as good shape as it had ever been conducted by Mr. Harper.

The property was located on a shallow stream, one of the tributaries of the Chippewa River, in the western part of Wisconsin, and the chief product of the farm, some two thousand bushels of wheat, had just been harvested.

Mrs. Harper largely depended on this crop to pay off a two-thousand-dollar mortgage owing to one Nathan Plunkett, the postmaster and a prosperous storekeeper of Eden, the nearest town, which was situated five miles distant, at the junction

of the Chippewa River and the stream which flowed by the farm.

"I had a visitor this afternoon, Jack," said his aunt, after the hired man had left the table to attend to his chores around the barn.

"Who was it, auntie?" he asked, curiously.

"Nathan Plunkett."

A cloud gathered on the boy's brow, for he didn't like Mr. Plunkett for a cent, nor, we may say, did the Eden storekeeper regard Jack Frost with a friendly eye.

Mr. Plunkett was a widower of about fifty, and had a son named Felix, who in many ways was very much like his father.

For some reason not quite clear to Jack Frost, the postmaster's son entertained a strong dislike for him, and never failed to show it when the two boys met.

Nathan Plunkett himself was not, on the whole, a popular man.

The fact, however, did not seem to worry him greatly.

He was the political mogul of Eden, and well enough in this world's goods to apparently disregard private prejudices.

"What did he want?" asked Jack, a bit brusquely, when Mrs. Harper named her visitor.

"He wanted to know if we had finished harvesting our wheat."

"Oh, he did?"

"Yes. I told him we had it all housed in our big barn."

"He seems to be very much interested in our affairs," replied the boy, sarcastically.

"He wished to know if we intended to ship it soon."

"What for?" said Jack, in some surprise.

"He wants to buy it."

"Wants to buy it?"

"He offered me seventy-five cents a bushel for it as it stands, cash."

"Why, auntie, wheat is selling for a dollar, and is expected to go still higher."

"But it must be delivered at Chicago, St. Louis or some other grain center to realize that. When you come to figure on the expense of getting it down to Eden, the nearest point on the railroad, and then add freight rates and commission charges, it will make quite a hole in the difference."

"I admit all that, auntie, but Mr. Plunkett wouldn't make you an offer if he didn't see his way clear to making a good profit on the transaction."

"I dare say that is true, Jack."

"Either he has found out in some way that wheat has just gone up a point or two, or is about to do so, or else there is something else in the background."



"What could be in the background."

"I am sure I couldn't tell you, auntie, as I'm not a mind-reader. You ought to know Mr. Plunkett better than I."

"I wish I didn't know him quite as well as I do."

"He comes around here often enough. Of course, it's none of my business. He doesn't come to see me."

"He comes to see me, I regret to say," replied Mrs. Harper, with a troubled look.

"I don't see why the fact that he holds a mortgage on this place for two thousand dollars makes it necessary that he should be so much in evidence. The farm isn't going to run away."

"It isn't the mortgage that brings him here. That is amply secured by this property. The farm was appraised at four thousand dollars when Frank borrowed the money of him three years ago. It is easily worth five thousand dollars to-day."

"All of that, auntie," replied Jack, nodding his head positively. "I heard Mr. Greene, who owns the place adjoining on the east, you know, say so, and he has a pretty clear idea of the value of property in this neighborhood."

"I can well believe that," Mrs. Harper answered. "Now, Jack, there is no reason why I should keep anything from you. You have been a son and a protector to me ever since Frank died." Her voice broke in a sob, and her handsome eyes filled with tears. "I don't really know what I should have done without you."

"I have done the best I could for you, Aunt Lucy," the boy said earnestly, rising, putting his arms protectingly about her, and kissing her gently on the cheek.

"You have done nobly, dear," she replied, drawing his head down and imprinting a kiss on his forehead. "How shall I ever thank you enough?"

"I don't want you to thank me, auntie. I am only doing my duty to you. You may depend that I will continue to do that as long as I remain with you."

"I hope that will be a long time, Jack," she said, with a caress.

"I hope so, too, auntie."

"As I was going to say, I have no wish to have any secrets from you, so I want to explain the real cause of Mr. Plunkett's visits. He wants to marry me."

"Marry—you!" gasped the boy, staring back in the greatest amazement.

"Yes, Jack. He had the assurance last week to ask me to be his wife."

"Great Caesar! And what did you say to him?"

"I was dumfounded."

"I should think you would be."

"I told him, in great indignation, that he ought to be ashamed to make such a proposal to me when he knew my dear husband had not been a year in his grave."

"And what did he say to that?"

"He said he did not expect that I would marry him at once. What he wanted was my promise that I would marry him after a time."

"Well, auntie?"

"I said I had no intention of ever marrying again."

"Of course you did."

"He said that was a very foolish decision. That I could not expect to carry on this farm successfully as matters stood."

"Ho!" exclaimed Jack. "You might have told him that the farm was thriving without any outside assistance."

"I did. I told him you were conducting the place to my entire satisfaction."

"What did he say to that?"

"He said that my assertion was ridiculous. That you were a mere boy, without agricultural experience. That you were bound to run the farm into the ground, involve me in financial embarrassments, and in the end cause me to lose the property."

"Very kind of him," laughed the boy. "I guess, on the contrary, I've harvested a crop of wheat that will relieve you of the embarrassment of owing Mr. Plunkett the sum of two thousand dollars."

"I told him so very plainly."

"I'll bet he didn't like it."

"He certainly did not, for he laughed in an unpleasant way, and remarked that there was many a slip between the cup and the lip."

"What did he mean by that?" asked the boy, quickly.

"I am sure I don't know, Jack."

"Nothing good, I'll bet," replied the young farmer, soberly and thoughtfully.

"He couldn't have meant me any harm, or he wouldn't have come around to-day and offered to buy the wheat from me. Even at seventy-five cents a bushel that would amount to enough to clear off the mortgage when it comes due a month from now."

"It certainly would, and leave something over. But I hope you won't accept his offer."

"I told him I had to consult you before I could give him an answer."

"I'll wager he didn't like that, either," chuckled Jack.

"I knew he didn't from the expression of his face," said Mrs. Harper. "He smiled unpleasantly—I didn't like his smile, Jack, for there seemed to be something menacing behind it—and replied that I could send him word. Then he took his leave, but I saw him talking to John in the yard, and afterward they both went to the big barn."

"Wanted to see how much wheat we really had, eh?"

"I presume so."

"I have no doubt that he is fully satisfied we have enough to loosen his grip on the farm. Do you know, auntie, it has been my opinion from the start that he figured on getting possession of this place through foreclosure proceedings. That is, ever since Uncle Frank died. He did not believe you would be able to run the farm successfully this year, especially as luck was against Uncle Frank the last two years or more. Besides, no one expected wheat would fetch more than fifty cents a bushel, or sixty at the most, which has been about the figure for the past five years. But Jordan, the great Chicago Board of Trade operator, is working to corner the product, and that has sent the price of grain soaring. It is hardly likely that he will succeed, though they say the people supporting him are worth millions. Were he successful, it would mean from \$1.50 to \$2 wheat, something unprecedented for the farmer, but rather hard on the consumer—the poor, particularly."

"Yes. Frank never dreamed of getting a dollar for this year's wheat," said Mrs. Harper, mournfully. "He counted on paying about one-half of the mortgage and getting a renewal for another year. He believed there would be no difficulty in making such arrangements, as the security had increased twenty per cent. in value."

"Well, I have very little confidence in Mr. Plunkett. I wouldn't trust him any further than I could see him. I am fully satisfied that he has been counting on becoming the owner of this farm at a bargain. He is known as a hard man to deal with when the advantage is on his side. That's his record in Eden. I hadn't been a month in the county before I heard enough about him to fill a book."

"I hope he won't come here again until the mortgage is due and he comes for his money," said Mrs. Harper.

"You don't hope it any more than I do, for he looks decidedly out of place in this neighborhood, and his room is better than his company. Besides, I don't want you to be annoyed by his unwelcome attentions."

"I certainly told him in unmistakable language that there wasn't the least chance that I should reconsider my stand in respect to his proposal of marriage."

"I am glad you made that plain to him, auntie. He had an awful nerve to think you would accept the attentions of any man so soon after Uncle Frank's death."

"But what about selling the wheat, Jack? You know, I shall need the money in a month to settle the mortgage."

"If you will confide the matter to my judgment, auntie, I think you will find that you will come out all right. I have a plan for shipping it to St. Louis by water which, if I can carry it out successfully, will save you all freight charges and bring you in a net result of at least one dollar a bushel."

"Why, Jack, you astonish me! What is this plan?"

"I'd rather say nothing about it just now," said the boy, with a smile.

And with that the little woman had to be content.

## CHAPTER II.

### A CRUISE IN THE SWAMP.

On the following morning at half-past five Jack Frost and his particular friend, Joe Beaseley, who worked for Farmer Greene, met by appointment at the end of the lane between the two farms where it faced upon the creek.

It was the first day of September, and the sun was just rising above the distant landscape into a perfectly clear sky.

"Well, Jack, where are we bound for?" asked Beaseley, curiously.



"We're bound for the swamp," was the prompt reply.

Half a mile from where the boys stood was a narrow and deep stream which flowed into the creek.

It formed the boundary of the Harper property on the west.

This branch ran through a small but dense swamp.

In the early spring its surface was overflowed with water.

It was covered with a thick growth of trees, and the place was dark and dismal.

Hardly any one ever visited the swamp except Jack Frost.

He was rather fond of exploring out-of-the-way places, and this deep and dark morass had early attracted his attention.

Just before his uncle died he had made a small raft and threaded its gloomy recesses, and the two boys, when they reached the edge of the swamp that morning, found the raft floating in the very spot Jack had left it months before, with its long pole lying undisturbed among the bushes.

"I'll bet there hasn't been any one here since you tied that raft to that stump," said Joe, in a positive tone.

"Doesn't look as if there had been, that's a fact."

"How long ago was that?"

"Last spring."

"You say we're going right through the swamp, eh?"

"That's what we are."

"Will this blamed old raft hold together, do you think?"

"Sure. Why not? Can't you see that I put it together to last? I didn't propose to have it come apart up in that morass and dump me out where I couldn't extricate myself, and nobody would hear my shouts for assistance. Not much, Joe Beaseley," and Jack wagged his head sagaciously.

"What sort of an exploring expedition are we going on?" asked Beaseley, when they had pushed off from the shore, Jack manipulating the pole in a skilful manner.

"None whatever," replied Frost.

"Well, what's in the wind, anyway?" persisted Joe, consumed by curiosity as to the object of the watery jaunt.

"Business," replied Jack, laconically.

"Business?" ejaculated Beaseley, in astonishment.

"Just so."

"What kind of business?"

"I told you I was thinking of building a kind of houseboat to float our wheat down the creek to the Chippewa, down the Chippewa to the Mississippi, and down the Mississippi to St. Louis, didn't I?"

"Sure you did. It's the finest scheme I ever heard of. It will be a jim-dandy trip, and you promised to take me along with you if I'd help you build the boat and assist in navigating it afterward."

"You've got it all right," grinned Jack, working the raft so as to avoid a sunken log whose nose was just on the level with the water.

"You can just bet I'll help you build the old Noah's Ark, and I'm ready to do my share toward seeing that it reaches St. Louis, too. I wouldn't miss it if Mr. Greene was to promise me a whole acre of his farm for myself if I'd agree to stay back here and let somebody else take my place. No, sir; not for Joe."

"I thought I could depend on you, Joe."

"You bet your boots you can. But what has that to do with this here trip up into the swamp?"

"Everything."

"How so?"

"We're making this trip to procure the material with which to build the boat," replied Jack.

"Are you going to cut down some of these trees? I see you brought an axe and a coil of rope with you."

"Cut down nothing," answered Frost. "I expect to find the stuff I want already prepared for us to use."

"You don't say!" replied Joe, in some surprise.

"I do say so, and you'll say so, too, when I show you what we've come after."

"You saw the stuff when you were here before?"

"I did. How else should I know it is to be got?"

"That's right," admitted Beaseley. "If it's all ready cut down, it will save us a powerful lot of labor."

"I wish we could build a boat big enough to take Mr. Greene's grain, too. We could make quite a little sum out of the freight. But that's out of the question."

"I reckon it is. Do you know how much wheat Mr. Greene has got in his barns altogether?"

"Five or six thousand bushels."

"Seven thousand scant."

"That's a lot," said Jack. "I wish we had as much."

"Your farm is less than half the size of ours," replied Joe.

"I know it. We've done as well as could be expected, I'm sure."

"Mr. Greene says you're a wonder, Jack. He can't get it through his head that you never were on a farm before you came out here."

"Well, I never was."

"I don't see, either, how you could take hold of your aunt's place and make things pan out the way you have. I've been on a farm ever since I was knee-high to a grasshopper, and blame me if I have the nerve to attempt to run a place like you do."

"You forget I have John Gray, who is an experienced man, at my back. I depend a lot on his advice."

"That's all right. He's a good worker and understands his business from A to Z, but just the same he hasn't got the head to run a farm successfully. If he had he wouldn't be working for you to-day. He's failed as an independent farmer and lost all his money at it."

"It seems to come natural to me to do the right thing and make the most out of my opportunities just as soon as I see my way clear. When I figured up the trouble and expense of carting our wheat to Eden, loading it on the cars there, paying freight to Chicago and other necessary expenses, I began to consider, since we have a continuous waterway from the farm right to the St. Louis elevators, if I couldn't manage to float the grain down there on a boat that I could build myself with your help."

"And you decided you could?"

"I did."

"I wouldn't have thought of such a thing in a coon's age," said Beaseley, looking at his companion admiringly. "And if I had, I shouldn't have known how to go to work to bring it about."

"I was good at mathematics at school," replied Jack. "I calculated the size and cubical capacity necessary in a houseboat capable of carrying, say, three thousand bushels of wheat in perfect safety down a river like the Mississippi, as well as making allowance for a small living compartment for the navigators themselves."

"Gee! You're as good as a school-teacher."

"Of course, I don't mean to attempt to build a real boat. I'm not a naval architect, nor a ship-builder. My idea is to construct a serviceable raft first as the foundation for the house in which I expect to store the grain in transit."

"I'll bet you'll do it all right," answered Beaseley, confidently. "Whatever you set out to do I guess you accomplish, or know the reason why."

"You seem to have a pretty good opinion of my abilities, Joe," smiled Jack.

"You can bet your boots I have; but I know one chap who hasn't," grinned Joe.

"Do you mean Felix Plunkett?"

"I do that. That fellow gives me a pain with his dandified airs. He thinks because his old man is the boss storekeeper and the postmaster of Eden that he's it. Well, he isn't by a long shot. He's jealous of you. It's like waving a red flag before a wild bull to mention your name before him. He can't say anything too mean about you. And what good does it do him? The little fool can't see that nobody takes any stock in what he says against you."

"I certainly try to do the right thing by everybody," said Jack.

"Of course you do. You're the most popular fellow in the county, bar none."

"Come off, Joe."

"I don't come off. I'm telling you the cold fact. All the boys like you and speak well of you, except Plunkett and two or three of his cronies, who side in with him because it's to their interest to do so. As for the girls! Well, say! You're first favorite from the fall of the flag."

"Aren't you trying to get me stuck on myself?" grinned Frost.

"Ho! You aren't built that way, Jack," and Beaseley wagged his head in a conclusive kind of way. "You can't tell me you aren't the real persimmons. Is there a social gathering for miles around where us young folks are in the majority that is considered complete without you? No, sree! That voice of yours, and the way you make your fingers prance over the strings of your banjo, wins every time."

"Then my popularity, as you call it, is really due to the fact that I possess the ability to entertain an audience. Is that it? You might give Plunkett the tip, then, if he has the grit, he might learn to play the instrument, and thus acquire the ascendancy he is so eager to possess."

"Pooh! He'd make a fine banjo player, I don't think. Be-



sides, he can't sing worth sour apples. Even if he could play and sing as well as you it wouldn't make him really popular. Just the same, if you lost your voice and a finger or two, so you couldn't sing or play any more, you wouldn't be liked a wee bit less. It's the boy himself, and not what he can do in the entertainment line, which counts. Do you want to know the real reason why Felix Plunkett is dead nuts on you?"

"Oh, I'm not particularly curious," replied Jack, carelessly.

"I'm going to tell you, anyway. It's because you've cut him out with Virginia Earle."

Miss Earle was the eldest daughter of Gordon Earle, cashier of the Eden National Bank.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Jack, flushing through the tan of his countenance.

"Is that so? I'm giving it to you straight, Jack. You only met her once, I know, at that party she attended at Carden's farm. Carden is her uncle. Plunkett was there, too, and you ought to remember how mad he was all the evening because you danced three times with Virginia and took her in to supper. All the boys said you were mashed on her."

Jack kept his head turned away while Joe was speaking.

"Well, she's been just crazy to meet you again."

"What are you giving me, Joe Beaseley?" asked Jack, in some confusion.

"I'm giving you the truth. You ought to feel good over it, for Virginia Earle is called the prettiest girl in Eden County."

Jack made no reply.

"Felix is plumb gone on her, and it exasperates him to know that she thinks so much of you and doesn't seem the least bit interested in him. He persists in forcing his attentions upon her, though the fellows tell me she hands him out plain hints enough to settle any other boy; but he's too thick to tumble to the truth."

"I'm not surprised," replied Jack. "But here we are at the end of our cruise. What do you think of that?" and the boy pointed at a bend in the stream which ran into the marsh.

### CHAPTER III.

#### HARVESTING THE TIMBER.

Piled up before them the boys saw a heap of logs, planks, boards and other fugitive lumber which had come down from the sawmills, miles up the country.

One end of a big log had been driven ashore by the current and had jammed itself between two trees.

All the rest of the boards, planks and timbers had rested upon this one, and, being driven in by the sweep of the stream at the bend, had been entangled and held by it.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Joe Beaseley, in no little astonishment, "what a lot of wood is there."

"I should say there is. Enough to build several rafts."

"With a house on each of them."

"Perhaps. It would all depend on the size of the rafts and the houses."

"Oh, I meant small ones."

"We shall be doing the neighborhood a service by removing this wood."

"How so?"

"Can't you see that it is gradually choking the stream up?"

"Sure thing. A blind man could see that."

"Why, how could a blind man see that, or anything else?" asked Jack, looking inquiringly at his companion.

"Oh, you know what I mean. I meant a man must be blind who couldn't see it."

"That's more like it. If that heap isn't cleared away the whole course of the stream will be choked by it in time. Then, when the snow melts next spring our farms, and many others in this vicinity, will be overflowed by the high water, and there would be the dickens to pay."

"I guess there would be," admitted Joe.

"We don't need all that lumber for our raft," said Jack, as he scanned the pile critically, "but it would be a pity not to save it, though it would cost a good deal of hard labor. It would come in handy in a good many ways."

"I'm willing to help you save it," said Joe. "I don't mind a little hard work, for I'm used to it."

"Well, we'll consider that later on."

"You're not going to build the raft up here, are you?"

"Of course not."

"Going to let the stuff float down through the swamp, eh?"

"That's my idea. The current will carry it to the creek. You may not have noticed, but the swing of the current where it empties into the creek sets right in to a bit of ground at the extreme point of our farm. I have driven several poles down into the bottom at a certain point, leaving the ends sticking several feet above the water. They'll catch the first logs we send down, and the rest will pile on top or jam up against them. A few may escape into the creek, but not many."

"You've got a great head, Jack."

"There's nothing particularly smart about that. It's merely an illustration of cause and effect—the same principle which has caused this accidental dam here."

"I suppose we may as well start in to throw these planks and boards into the current. It'll take some time, you know," viewing the amount of labor involved somewhat doubtfully.

"Is that the way you'd engineer the job, Joe?" laughed Frost.

"Why, how else would you do it?"

"There's an easier and much better way."

"If there is I want to know it," said Joe. "I'm not anxious to do any more work than is necessary."

"What do you suppose I brought that rope for?"

"You've got me. I'm not bright at guessing riddles."

"Well, I'll show you. Just make a sliding loop at that end, will you?"

"Sure," and Beaseley hastened to comply with this request. "There you are."

"Now crawl out onto that lumber, reach down over the end and hook the loop over the nose of that mischievous log which has caused all this trouble."

Joe followed the directions to the letter, and then stood up, watching to see what was going to occur.

"Do you want to get a good sousing and some heavy cracks on the head?" shouted Frost at him.

"Not on your life I don't," returned Beaseley, not moving, however.

"Then come back here."

"What for? This is a nice, airy spot where I am."

"Is it?" laughed Jack. "If the foundation was to come away from underneath your feet all of a sudden you'd think differently."

"Any danger of it doing that?" asked Joe, in some alarm, hastily moving toward where his companion stood on a projecting point of the shore.

"Not until you give me the benefit of your muscles."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to yank the key log out from under that pile after I cut away a part of the end here where it's caught in this tree."

"Oh, I see. That'll let the whole pile of stuff down with a rush," replied Joe, who could see through a millstone when the hole was pointed out to him.

"I rather think it will. Then the surplus water above will follow and push the lumber and logs before it. There's only one obstacle which may temporarily disarrange my project."

"What is that?"

"The timber may get caught at some point in the swamp and pile up again."

"We can easily set them free again," replied Joe, confidently.

"Can we? I don't know about that," answered Jack, doubtfully.

"Why not?" asked Beaseley, in surprise.

"It may get jammed where we couldn't reach it on the raft."

"What would you do in that case?"

"I don't propose to cross a bridge until I come to it. In other words, I'm not going to worry about such a thing until it actually takes place."

"That's right. I agree with you there. Do you want me to do the chopping here?"

"You can begin if you're anxious for the exercise. When you get tired I'll lend a hand."

Beaseley took the hatchet and began at the job.

The log proved to be a more stubborn proposition than they had calculated on.

Joe hacked away for a quarter of an hour, and then Jack relieved him.

In the course of half an hour, however, they weakened the log to such an extent that Frost believed their muscles would do the rest.

So they got hold of the rope and began to exert themselves.



Inch by inch the key of the lumber structure began to yield.

Planks and slabs and timber occasionally disengaged themselves from the mass and started with the stream down through the swamp.

"Once more, old man," cried Jack, bracing himself for a mighty effort.

Joe put his foot against a convenient tree and then both pulled away for all they were worth.

Then something happened.

The key log suddenly came away with a rush, and Joe and Jack went heels over head backward, Beaseley narrowly escaping a ducking in the swamp.

"Wow!" howled Joe, sitting up and rubbing the dirt out of his eyes.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Jack, who was the first to pick himself up.

"I don't see anything funny about that," grumbled Beaseley, feeling his back and other parts of his body, to make sure he was still whole. "I nearly busted my back."

"A miss is as good as a mile, old fellow," grinned Frost.

"You wouldn't say that if you'd got the whack in the jaw I caught," objected his companion.

"Get up and watch the lumber shoot."

Joe got up and looked.

"It's a regular mill-stream now, isn't it?"

"That won't last long."

"Do we go back on the raft?"

"Of course. I want to see that the channel through the swamp keeps clear. If it chokes up we've got to assist things if we can."

"Suppose we get stuck ourselves in the heart of the old morass?"

"Oh, don't begin supposing trouble is going to occur. You might hoodoo the whole scheme."

"I wouldn't like to do that," replied Joe, so seriously that Jack had to laugh at him.

"If you're ready we'll go afloat. It's breakfast time by now, and I'm beginning to get hungry," he said, stepping onto the raft.

"Same here," replied Joe, following him with alacrity.

They cast off, poled the raft into the current and then allowed things to take their course, which they did in a very satisfactory manner.

Wherever they came across logs or pieces of timber caught in the projections of the swamp they pushed them clear.

In this way they continued on down through the morass toward the creek, preceded, surrounded and followed by a great company of fugitive timber.

Fortunately no serious difficulty was encountered during the trip, which was a great deal shorter than when they had to pole the raft upstream.

They arrived at length at their destination, where they found the advance lumber anchored to the obstructing poles placed at the point of the bight by Jack.

"The whole collection will be here in an hour," said Frost. "It's all the same to you, Joe, we'll go to breakfast now. You eat with me, of course."

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### A LEAP FOR LIFE.

After breakfast Beaseley returned to the Greene farm to attend to certain chores about the place, while Jack employed himself in a similar way around his own place.

At one o'clock the two boys met again at the bight of land near the creek, and during the rest of the afternoon busied themselves hauling the fugitive timber onto dry land and separating it into individual piles, ready for business.

This work took up all of their spare time for several days.

At length they had sorted out as much timber as Jack calculated he could use in the construction of the raft, which, owing to the weight it would have to sustain, was designed to be quite a ponderous affair, so far as its foundation was concerned.

"We'll leave the rest of the stuff for future consideration," remarked Jack, as the two boys sat on an old log, resting, and watched the sun setting in all its glory in the west.

"I haven't any kick coming," grinned Joe, as he mopped the perspiration from his freckled forehead.

"You don't feel like backing out of the rest of the business, do you?" asked Frost, with a cheerful smile.

"I should say not. The most disagreeable and least interesting part is over. I'm just tickled to take hold of what is to come."

"You won't find it all fun."

"Oh, I don't know. I'm willing to take chances on that."

"I hope I won't make any mistakes in my calculations," said Jack. "If I do, we won't be able to carry all the wheat down the river, which would be a great pity and a big disappointment to me."

"Oh, I guess you'll come out all right," said Joe, reassuringly.

"There must be no guesswork about it," asserted Frost. "The moment such a thing as that enters into the scheme we'll be all at sea."

"If it was my wheat I'd be willing to take chances on you making a success of your plan."

"Much obliged, Joe. You seem to put lots of confidence in me."

"Sure. Why not?" replied Beaseley, stoutly.

"Well, the proof of the pudding is in the eating," replied Jack, rising. "To-morrow morning I'm going to town to purchase the necessary hardware with which to begin operations. Want to come along?"

"Of course I do."

"All right. I'll have the mare harnessed up ready to start about nine o'clock. I'll look for you about that time."

The boys started off together, and separated in the Harper farmyard, Joe proceeding on through the gate, down the lane, and, vaulting the first fence he came to, cut across the fields to the Greene farm.

Next morning he was on hand in plenty of time, and helped Jack harness up his favorite roadster.

Then they started for Eden in high spirits.

They drove into town as the clocks were striking ten.

Nathan Plunkett kept all the articles in his store that Jack expected to purchase, but somehow or another the boy didn't care to trade with him as long as there were other stores in town that could supply his wants.

He stopped in front of Josiah Allen's store, Mr. Plunkett's most successful business opponent, and the postmaster, who happened to be looking out of his window at the time, took note of the fact, and the circumstance did not make Nathan feel any better disposed toward the boy he cordially detested, and on whom he hoped some day in the near future to have full satisfaction.

Jack purchased nails of two or three sizes, a small keg of spikes, a new saw, a stout hatchet and sundry other articles of hardware.

"Going to build a house?" asked the clerk, with a grin.

"Sure," replied Jack. "I'm thinking of getting married and setting up housekeeping."

"Don't forget to invite me to the wedding."

"I'll keep you in mind. Here, Joe, carry these packages out to the wagon and watch the team. I'm going over to the post-office to see if there's any mail for us."

There was a letter for his aunt, which Felix Plunkett handed out to him in an ungracious way, as if it went against his grain to wait on Frost.

While he was in the act of putting it in his pocket the fire alarm bell rang, and Felix vaulted over the counter and ran to the door.

A few moments later one of the fire engines, a steamer lately imported from Chicago, dashed by with a jingle of bells.

Jack left the store in a hurry and crossed over to his team.

"Drive ahead, Joe. Let's see where the fire is."

Beaseley kept the engine in sight until he saw it draw up near a fire-plug on a corner a dozen blocks from where they started.

They were now in the residential section of Eden, where many of the better-class citizens of the town had their homes.

A crowd was already gathering in the vicinity of a pretentious-looking three-story dwelling; from nearly every one of the front windows smoke was issuing, though not densely.

Joe drew the mare up near the off curb and then directed his attention toward the imperiled house.

"Good gracious!" he suddenly exclaimed. "That's Gordon Earle's house."

"You don't mean Virginia Earle's—"

"Yes, I do. That's Virginia Earle's home. Hey, where are you going, Jack?"

Frost had sprung to the street and was running toward the burning house.



"Has the family got out?" asked Jack of a policeman who was endeavoring to establish a fire line in that direction.

"I couldn't tell you. Stand back, please."

The boy, in some excitement, slipped away and addressed the same question to two or three of the spectators in turn, but they could give him no information.

Further on he tackled another policeman, but the man, instead of answering his question, pushed him roughly back into the crowd of curious onlookers.

At this juncture the crowd exhibited a sudden spasm of excitement.

Jack looked toward the scene of the fire and saw the form of a girl, which, even at that distance, his sharp eyes recognized as Virginia Earle, leaning out of a side window on the third floor, toward the rear of the house, where it joined a three-story brick structure.

The smoke was sifting out of the window all around her, and her position was apparently one of great peril.

Even as the boy looked she was joined by a little, golden-haired creature, whom Jack knew to be Virginia's sister.

The sight of the girl, who had occupied a great share of his thoughts ever since he was introduced to her some six weeks before at Carden's farm, standing in imminent danger of losing her life, with no one seemingly going to her assistance, aroused Jack to a fever of excitement.

He burst through the crowd, eluded the policeman who sought to stay his course, dashed across the street and, springing up the front steps of the Earle dwelling, disappeared inside the house, battling his way upward through the smoke, which was filling every nook and corner, in a frantic effort to reach the third floor and the imperiled girls in the rear.

When he arrived at the second floor landing he saw that the rooms in the back were blazing furiously, indicating that the fire had originated in this part of the house.

Jack realized that Virginia and her little sister were standing right over this sea of flame, which at any moment might burst through the ceiling and cut them off from all hope of rescue.

It was slow and suffocating work for him to make his way to the landing of the third floor through the choking smoke, which made his eyes run water and his lungs pant for a breath of fresh air.

But he persevered, for he knew the lives of the two girls were at stake, and might depend entirely upon his personal efforts.

He reached the upper landing at last, rushed to a front window, where he leaned out, dizzy and half-choked, and drew in copious draughts of air, until he felt in a measure recovered.

The crowd in front saw him and set up a shout.

The boy did not seem to hear or notice them, and soon withdrew from the window and began fighting his way to the rear.

Already the flames were eating their way through the flooring of the passage, and he could see the glare from other flames beyond through the dun-colored smoke.

To proceed slowly and cautiously any longer in this direction Jack saw was folly; he would only be overcome by the smoke.

He must make a bold dash for the room where Virginia and her sister had taken refuge.

And he did, stumbling and reeling like a drunken man into the chamber where, through the misty cloud of smoke, he saw the shadowy forms of the two girls at the window.

In another moment he was standing by their side, and Virginia, who had a short length of stout clothesline in her hand, recognized him with a glad cry.

"Jack, you will save us, will you not?" she exclaimed, almost piteously.

"I will," he replied, gamely, "or perish with you in the flames."

He looked out of the window to see what the firemen were doing to effect the rescue of the girls.

There were a number of them in the yard below, some carrying in a line of hose, others yelling and gesticulating violently to the hook and ladder people, who had just arrived, to bring on their ladders.

"Oh, heavens!" cried Virginia, throwing one of her arms around Jack's neck in a spasm of terror. "The room is filling with fire!"

Her little sister seemed stricken speechless with fear, for she never uttered a sound.

The flames were encroaching so fast upon them from behind that Frost saw that their position would be absolutely

untenable before the firemen could get a ladder up to the window.

"Great Scott!" he exclaimed. "Something must be done, or we three will surely be sacrificed."

He glanced down at the ground, forty feet below, and then at the roof, close at hand, of the adjoining building.

In a moment he had made up his mind what he would do. It was a desperate expedient, but necessity knows no law.

He removed his jacket and threw it far out into the yard; then he snatched the short clothesline from Virginia's grasp and hurriedly made one end fast to the leg of the single bed, the head of which stood near the window.

"I'm going to try to reach yonder roof by springing to it from the sill outside. If I am successful, quickly unfasten the end of the line I have tied to the bed and fasten it around your sister under her arms, and I'll draw her up there. After that I'll throw the rope back to you, and you must tie yourself in a similar manner. Do you understand?"

She nodded in a terrified way.

There was no time to be lost if he hoped to carry his plan to a successful issue.

The flames were already reaching for them.

He tied the rope securely around his waist, stepped out on the sill and measured with his eyes the distance he proposed to jump.

Then, nerving himself for the effort, he leaped upward.

## CHAPTER V.

### COMMENCING OPERATIONS.

A hundred pair of eyes were on Jack Frost when he made his thrilling spring for the adjoining roof, and a great cheer broke from as many throats when it was seen that he had caught onto the ledge and hung there for a moment dangling in mid-air.

Then his muscles of steel came into full play.

He drew himself up until his chin rested on the coping, and then with a mighty effort he swung his legs outward and upward and landed upon the edge of the cornice.

It was comparatively easy for him to scramble to the roof.

"Quick, Virginia," he cried to the girl, who had watched his risky feat with distended eyes. "Unfasten the rope and put it about your sister."

The girl seemed to wake from her trance and hastened to obey his order.

As soon as she had tied the line properly under the child's arms she lifted her onto the window-sill.

"Swing off, little one," cried Jack, pulling upon her and dislodging her from her foothold.

The little girl uttered a thrilling scream, for she thought she was falling.

But she wasn't.

She was sailing up through the air as fast as the boy could work his arms.

In a moment or two he had her safe on the roof and was unfastening the line.

"Catch!" shouted Jack, throwing the rope-end back to Virginia.

The girl caught it and began at once to tie it around herself.

Then she bravely stepped out on the sill.

And it was high time that she did, for her dress was already smoking, and the fire was creeping up all about the spot she had but just left.

"Now swing off!" cried Jack, bracing himself to meet her weight.

She obeyed him, and he started to pull like a good fellow. As she came within arm's reach of the coping she grasped it.

Jack seized her by the arms and pulled her over onto the roof.

"Thank heaven! You are safe!" said the boy, fervently.

Virginia gave a little gasp as she looked into his eyes, realized that her danger was over, and then the reaction overcame her and she fainted dead away.

At that moment the scuttle in the roof, a little distance away, was thrown back and a couple of firemen appeared.

They were surprised to find Frost and the two girls up there, for they hadn't seen Jack's leap, nor the rescue which followed.

"How did you get here?" one asked the boy.



"I jumped for this roof, was lucky to reach the coping, and then with this line I pulled the girls up."

"Well, you're a nervy chap," replied the fireman, admiringly.

"Oh, I don't know," answered Joe, lightly. "It was neck or nothing with the three of us, and when one's life is in danger nothing is too risky to attempt."

"This girl seems to have fainted," said the man, noticing the limp form of Virginia lying in Jack's arms. "We'll take her down to the street."

"I wish you would," replied the boy.

Frost followed in the rear of the procession, and in a couple of minutes the two daughters of the bank cashier were carried into a residence on the other side of the rear street.

Jack thought it time to get back to Joe and his team.

He was elated, because not only had he done his duty nobly, but had saved the lives of two helpless girls, one of whom he liked better than any one else in this world, not excepting his Aunt Lucy, and that was saying a great deal.

First, however, he had to recover his jacket, which he had removed just before making his great leap for the roof, and which he had cast into the yard as far as possible from the blazing building, now a mass of flames from the first floor to the roof.

He found that one of the firemen had carried his jacket outside and placed it on the hook and ladder truck so it would be out of harm's way.

He put it on, pushed his way through the crowd, avoiding a local reporter who was after him, and reached his wagon, where Joe was watching the flames and wondering what had become of his companion.

Beaseley did not witness Frost's rescue of the two girls, as the wagon was too far away, and did not dream that Jack was otherwise employed than as a front row spectator of the conflagration.

"Jumping Christopher! What's the matter with your face?" exclaimed Joe, when his friend climbed up on the seat beside him. "You're like a smoked ham. You must have been pretty close to the fire."

"I was," grinned Jack, who, now that he was out of all danger and the girls were safe, was disposed to make light of his thrilling adventure.

"Where were you? I suppose the Earles all got out safely?"

"They got out all right."

"Did you see any of them?"

"I saw Miss Virginia and her little sister."

"They must feel all cut up over the loss of their home. The place seems to be completely gutted out."

"It certainly is. The house caught fire in the rear."

"In the kitchen, I suppose?"

"No. Upstairs on the second floor."

"Well, it's too bad. What was all that shouting about a little while ago? There seemed to be excitement to burn. I thought probably some of the Earle family were being rescued from the building by the firemen with their ladders."

"The cause of the excitement," replied Jack, slowly, "was due to the fact that Miss Virginia and her sister were cut off by the flames from escape through the front of the house, and were assisted from the window of a room where they had taken refuge to the roof of the adjoining building."

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Joe, in some excitement. "I wish I had seen that."

"I think we've wasted time enough here, Joe," said Frost, taking up the reins and turning the mare's head down the street. "I've got a few more things to buy, and then we'll start for home."

They reached the farm about one o'clock, deposited their purchases in the small barn and went in to dinner.

After the meal they loaded on a barrow such implements as they needed to begin work with and wheeled them down to the scene of their operations.

The afternoon was employed in cutting down six stout trees, which provided them with foundation logs thirty feet long, which they carefully trimmed.

In each of these they chopped out wide notches, exactly two feet apart, and of a depth sufficient to receive and hold the twelve-foot stout slabs they proposed to spike into place next morning.

Promptly at sunrise the boys were on hand to resume work upon the craft Jack put so much dependence on.

"We'll take our morning bath first," remarked Frost, getting out of his clothes as fast as he could, and his example was quickly followed by Joe.

After they had disported themselves for ten minutes in the basin Jack said:

"We'll begin the framework of the raft before we dress, as we've got to put it together on the water. Fetch a couple of those slabs while I get the small sledgehammer and a handful of spikes."

Then they placed two of the logs side by side, close to the shore.

Jack spiked each end of the two slabs to the inner log, at the extremities of it. Then he and Joe rolled the outer log away from the other until the two were twelve feet apart, and the other end of each slab was spiked to it, thus forming the shape of a raft—thirty feet long and twelve feet wide.

"Now, Joe, we'll push each of the other logs one by one into place and spike the slabs to them."

This work was immediately carried out, and thus the six foundation logs were secured in place at equal distances apart.

"Now for the balance of the slabs," said Frost.

The thirteen remaining slabs were spiked into the notches which had been provided to receive them, and the boys concluded they had done enough until after breakfast.

They resumed their clothes and viewed with a great deal of satisfaction the stout framework on which they were to build the upper works of their novel craft.

Then they went to breakfast.

## CHAPTER VI.

### BUILDING THE RAFT.

At nine o'clock the boys were back again at the basin, full of enthusiasm for the work in hand.

"I see wheat is a dollar and ten," said Jack. "Old man Fogarty told my aunt so this morning."

"That's good. Perhaps it will be a dollar and a quarter by the time we have this raft completed. I wish I had a few thousand bushels to sell," he added, with a cheerful grin.

"What do you think? Nathan Plunkett offered us seventy-five cents a bushel for it nearly a week ago, when the papers quoted the price at the grain centers as one dollar."

"Plunkett wants the earth."

"Well, he was prepared to pay cash for it just as it stood in our barn. It would have cost him something to ship and sell it. But I am sure he had a pretty good idea that it would go up. At any rate, he expected us to hold it for him for two weeks, at any rate, perhaps longer, which would give him the benefit of the expected rise."

"Well, if he offered you a dollar now for it just as it stands, would you take it and give up the raft scheme?"

"I would not. I am satisfied wheat is going higher. It might even go to one dollar and fifty cents, though I hardly think so. Still, there is always a chance of such a figure when these big grain operators of the Chicago Board of Trade try to corner the product of the country."

"It's a fine thing for the big wheat growers out West here when the price does get to soaring."

"That's what it is. Come, now, get busy; we've lots of work on our hands to-day."

"I'm ready. What'll I do first?"

"There are a lot of large logs that came down with the rest of the stuff."

"I see them."

"We must get enough of them ashore to fit in between those slabs and make a solid foundation for the next tier to rest on."

"We can do that all right," said Joe, with alacrity.

"We only want to use those that are about twelve foot and over in length. Where they are too long we'll cut them down. I suppose you like to saw?" with a grin.

"Oh, I'm dead stuck on it."

"You will have lots of practice, then, before we have done with the raft."

"Fetch along your log and your saw and see me go through it like greased lightning."

"You tell it well, Joe, but you'll sing another song when the perspiration begins to come."

"Ho! You haven't seen me work yet."

"Haven't I? I thought you put in some pretty good strokes yesterday afternoon. If you can improve on that you're all to the good, old man."

"Mr. Greene says I'm the best worker on the farm."

"I'm glad to hear it. It does you credit. The world has



no use for lazy people these days. I've seen a lot of them in the city, sitting on the benches in the parks, or gathering about open lots where excavation was going on. However, I don't mean to say all these people were naturally lazy or shirked work. Some of them, no doubt, would gladly have gone to work if they could have found the work to do. Unless a man is a skilled worker at some prosperous trade it is not so easy to find a job in a big city, where there are a dozen applicants for each position open. I have heard it said that there are one hundred and fifty thousand people continuously idle in New York City, and not necessarily through their own fault, either."

"Now, Joe, there's a log that is too long. Just measure off twelve feet with that two-foot rule and then saw the surplus length off."

Beaseley proceeded to follow orders, while Jack began to shave down to a flat surface one side of each end of the logs they had hauled ashore.

After the necessary number of logs had been prepared the boys rolled them one by one onto the raft and spiked them into place.

"That raft as it is now ought to sustain a pretty heavy weight," remarked Joe, looking at it critically.

"It will; but it isn't buoyant enough to hold sixty odd tons of wheat."

"Will the wheat weigh as much as that?" asked Beaseley.

"Yes. I have estimated that we have easily a big freight car load and a half. The new cars are said to have a capacity of eighty thousand pounds. Our wheat, therefore, weighs, all told, one hundred and twenty thousand pounds."

"And you think we'll be able to carry all that on this raft to St. Louis?"

"Sure as you live, Joe, if my constructive ideas pan out, correctly."

"All right. I'm ready to take your word for it," replied Joe, cheerfully.

"Now, Joe, we'll nail some more slabs lengthwise; any old size will do, so that they don't overlap the water too far at the ends. Leave sufficient space between the layers for another tier of logs, which, of course, may also be of varying sizes. Understand?"

"Sure thing," replied Beaseley, going to work laying the slabs into place, with Jack helping him.

When the requisite number of slabs had been nailed down on the logs, Frost put a few more spikes into the first tier to make sure that everything would hold together, even under trying circumstances, and then he and Joe set to work to spike down the second tier.

"This is the highest raft I ever saw," said Beaseley, when they paused for a brief rest.

"That's because there's no weight on it yet to push it down into the water. Just wait till we begin to load the wheat on board and you'll see it sink."

"It looks stable enough to float a loaded freight car."

"Don't you believe it. I've arranged for a number of empty barrels I'm going to attach around on both sides. That will give me the real buoyancy I'm after."

"Well, well; what a head you've got, Jack!"

"That's as old as the hills."

"I know that, but I never would have thought of putting them into use."

"You want to think when you start to plan a thing. That's what your brains were made for. Come, now, you're cool enough, and the afternoon is getting on. We will put a layer of planks down now."

"That's where I spread myself," grinned Beaseley.

"Is it? See that you do yourself proud, then."

"You just watch me. I'm a born carpenter. Mr. Greene gets me to do all the jobbing around the place. I wouldn't be surprised if he had me build him a new farmhouse."

The sound of the dinner-horn in the distance, however, put a stop to work for the time being, and Joe reluctantly dropped the first board he was hauling on board of the raft.

A surprise awaited Jack when he went into the house, all flushed from his strenuous labor of the morning.

He had noticed a buggy standing in the yard, and wondered who their visitor was, but was not prepared to see Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Earle and Virginia and her sister, who had arrived a little while before.

Mr. Earle rose from his chair and seized the boy by the hand.

"My dear lad, how are we to express the gratitude we feel toward you for saving the lives of our two children under the most dreadful circumstances? It was a magnificent ex-

ample of true heroism. But for you I am assured we should now be childless."

His voice shook and there were tears in his eyes.

Jack was greatly embarrassed and hardly knew what to say, the more so as Mrs. Earle took a hand in the proceedings, and said so many pretty things about him and assured him of their grateful appreciation.

"I only did what I thought was the proper thing in such an emergency," he stammered.

"You put your own life in jeopardy to save Virginia and her sister, my lad. There's no question about that. I've had accounts of the affair from a dozen eye-witnesses. That leap you took to the roof of the rear building was a splendid exhibition of cool nerve and judgment. Only for that all of you would have perished before the firemen could have reached you. I want you to understand that Mrs. Earle and myself are truly grateful to you, and that we fully appreciate the debt of gratitude you have placed us under," said the bank cashier, shaking the boy's hand once more in a warm and feeling manner. "As for Virginia herself, she is waiting impatiently to thank you, and so is our little Jessie. Both of them will remember what they owe you as long as they live."

"Why, Jack never told me a word about what he had done at the fire," said Mrs. Harper to Mrs. Earle, as Virginia came forward, took Jack's hand in hers and thanked him repeatedly for the great service he had rendered her and her sister.

"I am very glad I was on hand at such a critical moment to help you," said the boy, blushing to the roots of his hair. "I am always glad to be of service to my friends, especially to you, Miss Earle."

"You say that very nicely," replied Virginia, with a smile and a blush. "We must be very good friends after this."

"I hope we will."

"Why, of course we will. You must call and see us often. Papa has rented a house on Jefferson street until we rebuild the old site. As soon as we move in, which will be some time next week, you must come and spend a whole afternoon and evening."

"I shall be very glad to do so, Miss Earle."

"I shall hold you to your word, remember," she said, with a winsome smile. "Now speak to Jessie. The poor child is just dying to say something to you."

The Earles accepted an invitation to stay to dinner.

Virginia was placed next to Jack, and she had lots to say to him during the meal.

Frost thought he had never met so pretty and sprightly a young miss, and he was more than ever charmed with her.

In fact, the two young people were very much taken up with each other, a fact which did not escape the observation of Jack's aunt, who smiled and thought the intimacy a very desirable one for her nephew, as the Earles were looked upon as people of considerable social importance in Eden.

After dinner the visitors prepared to take their leave.

Mr. and Mrs. Earle had more nice things to say to Jack, and wound up by assuring the boy that he would always be a most welcome visitor at their home.

"Virginia Earle is a very pretty and sweet girl, isn't she, Jack?" remarked his aunt, as the callers drove off toward town.

"Yes, aunty, she is, indeed."

"Do you know, I ought to scold you very much for not telling me how heroically you acted at the fire," she smiled, tapping the boy fondly on his cheek. "All you told me was that there had been a big fire in Eden, which had destroyed Mr. Earle's house. Don't you know you did a big thing when you saved those girls in such a remarkable way?"

"Well, aunty, you don't want me to go around blowing my own horn, do you? When a person knows he has done his duty in a tight place, that ought to be satisfaction enough for him. I hate to be complimented and patted on the back, just as if I was a little boy, because I happened to have done something out of the ordinary."

"At any rate, you have made some very nice and good friends for yourself. Mr. Earle will, no doubt, be of great service to you some day."

"I've no objection to making real friends. A person can't have too many of that sort. But I'll never have a better friend in this world than you, aunty," and he gave her an affectionate hug.

"I hope not, dear, at least until you find some one you will learn to love and mean to marry. When that time comes, Jack, I hope she will be as lovely a girl as Virginia Earle," and she looked at him slyly.



Jack blushed vividly, gave his aunt a kiss and ran out of the house.

When he got back to the basin he found that Beaseley had been most industrious since he resumed work after dinner.

He had nearly finished covering the second tier of logs with planks, and had performed the job in a very creditable manner.

"You're all to the good, Joe," said Jack, as he took off his jacket. "Sorry I was behind time, but my aunt had visitors and I couldn't get away."

The boys worked away so diligently that by sundown they had the raft about half finished, and a very substantial looking craft it was even at this stage.

## CHAPTER VII.

### A PLOT AGAINST THE WHEAT.

Mrs. Harper knew that her nephew and his friend Beaseley were engaged upon some enterprise in which they took an unusual interest, but as Jack said nothing to her about the nature of the work she made no inquiries, being fully satisfied that whatever the boy gave his time to was all right, and that he would no doubt tell her all about it in good time.

That evening she mentioned the subject of the shipment of the wheat.

"There is no hurry, auntie," Jack told her. "Wheat is going up every day. You know, Mr. Fogarty told you it was one dollar and ten cents this morning."

"Yes, Jack; but, you know, I shall soon need the money to take up the mortgage."

"That will be all right. You have four weeks yet to provide for it. Even if you didn't ship it, and the price continued to rise, you could easily get a loan on it that would see you through. I am arranging now to ship the grain inside of the next ten days, unless it should be considered advisable to hold on longer for a higher price."

"Do as you think best, Jack. I rely entirely on you."

"I shan't fail you, you may depend."

Jack and Joe returned to the construction of the raft next morning at sunrise, worked like Trojans all day, and when they finally knocked off they had the satisfaction of knowing that the raft itself was finished.

It only remained to build the superstructure or house in which Jack expected to carry his aunt's wheat to the elevator at St. Louis.

This was the most pleasing part of the job, because it promised to be the most difficult of accomplishment.

The structure was to be a sort of Noah's Ark in appearance, and was to occupy a space ten feet by twenty-five, and to be high enough to accommodate the cargo without being top-heavy.

The deck of the raft had been extended a foot and a half beyond the hull part on the sides, making the width fifteen feet, and had been rounded out five additional feet forward and the same amount aft, making the extreme length over all forty feet.

A small, light addition was to be built onto the after part of the cargo-house to serve as sleeping quarters.

They expected to cook and eat in the open air, weather permitting, using a small stove imbedded in a sand-box.

Jack had his plans down fine, and Joe fell in with them as though they were manufactured to his order.

The next day was Sunday, and, of course, nothing was done on the raft, though both Jack and Joe visited the basin to see that everything was just as they left them the previous evening.

The boys, as usual, went to meeting at the little brick church at the cross-roads, and afterward attended Sunday-school.

Then they parted for dinner.

Joe spent the afternoon with Jack, and the boys talked enthusiastically about the good time they expected to have navigating the Chippewa and Mississippi rivers.

"And what will you do with the raft after you are done with it? Seems a pity to let it go for firewood, after all the trouble we will have gone to after it's completed."

"It wouldn't pay to have it towed 'way back up here," replied Jack. "I may be able to sell it as a marine curiosity."

"It will be that all right when we are done with it," snickered Beaseley. "I say, what's the matter with our advertising her in the St. Louis papers as the only and original Noah's Ark, on exhibition at such a place, general admission one nickel?"

"Well, Joe, you have thought up an original idea at last, haven't you?"

"Oh, you don't know me yet, Jack. My head is chockful of the brightest things under the sun, only I can't always fish them out when they're wanted."

"I sympathize with you, old man. Come, let's go to supper, then we'll go over and see Will Benson and see if we can't make life miserable for him for an hour or two."

Will Benson was a mutual friend who lived a mile and a half from the Harper farm, and, as he had a couple of interesting sisters, to one of whom Joe Beaseley was somewhat partial, the boys often found it to their taste to go over to the Benson farm and spend an evening.

They had their usual good time on this occasion, and left the Benson place a little after nine to return to their homes.

The weather looked threatening, and there was every indication that it would rain before morning.

This was not a desirable outlook for Jack and Joe, as it would interfere with the raft enterprise, and Jack especially was anxious to get the craft finished as soon as possible.

"It will be force if it rains to-morrow," said Beaseley, casting a doubtful glance at the sky.

"I should say it would," replied Jack, finding little consolation in the stormy aspect of the heavens. "However, it may rain during the night and clear off by the morning."

"That wouldn't be so bad; but I'm afraid we can't expect any such good luck. That sky looks as if it was getting ready for a week's business."

"A week! I should hope not. That would give us an awful setback."

"Well, you can't put any dependence at all in the weather. If it starts in to rain tonight, it is liable to keep it up for twenty-four hours, or forty-eight, for that matter. I wouldn't be surprised if it acted that way just to spite us."

Something damp and clinging struck Jack on the nose at that moment.

He held out his hand, and presently another drop of water fell on it.

"It's beginning to rain already," he said, gloomily.

"I see it is," decided Beaseley.

They hastened their steps, for they had their good clothes on and didn't want to get them wet.

But the rain had very little consideration for them, and came down faster and faster, and pretty big drops at that.

"I guess we're in for a good soaking all right," grumbled Joe. "I don't like this even a little bit."

"Nor I, either," agreed Jack. "But we can take refuge in that old tumble-down shack on the other side of those trees until this downpour blows over. It won't last long, judging from the way it is starting to come down."

"I'm ready to put in anywhere there's a roof to keep off the moisture."

"Let's run, then," said Jack, starting off at a rapid pace.

And Beaseley didn't lose a moment in following his lead.

They reached the shack in good time to escape the worst of the shower, which began to beat upon the roof of the ruin at a smart rate as soon as they got under cover.

"We're lucky," chuckled Jack. "If we were out in that we'd soon be a sight for sore eyes."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Joe, suddenly, making a quick move to one side.

"What's the matter?" asked Frost.

"Something must have given away on the roof," stammered Beaseley, "for a stream of water struck me on the back of the neck just now and soaked me to the waist."

Jack laughed, and then, fearing he might come in for a similar kind of bath, suggested that they get away back in a corner.

Hardly had they taken up their new position when they heard a noise outside and two men ran into the shack.

"I wonder how long this is goin' to last, Plunkett?" said one of the new comers, in surly tones.

"Oh, we've lots of time," replied his companion, in a voice familiar to Frost as belonging to the postmaster and store-keeper of Eden.

The boy, surprised to encounter Mr. Plunkett so far away from his usual stamping grounds, pressed Joe's arm and whispered in his ear to be as quiet as a mouse.

"Supposin' it keeps up all night, what then?" growled the first speaker.

"Oh, it won't keep up. It's early yet, and we might better be here than haggling a hedge," said the postmaster.

"I don't know but you're right, Plunkett. How far from here is the Harper farm?"



"About half a mile across the meadows."

"And where is the barn located that holds that there wheat?"

"Perhaps four hundred yards back of the house."

"Most of them kind of barns are raised on stilts like, a few feet from the ground. Kind of helps to keep the stuff dry. It'll make a pretty bonfire, I reckon," and the wondering boys heard the fellow chuckle.

They couldn't understand what he meant, but they were not long kept in the dark as to the intentions of the two men.

"I hope it will," almost hissed Mr. Plunkett. "At the price wheat is going these days those two thousand bushels will save the farm to the widow and do me out of a good thing, unless we send it up in fire and smoke to-night."

"Ain't that what we're goin' to do? We didn't come away out here from town for nothin', I reckon."

"I should hope not. With the wheat lost to her, and no possibility of paying the mortgage, which comes due next month, I guess Mrs. Harper will be glad to listen to my terms if she wishes to keep a roof over her head," said Mr. Plunkett.

"And do you really mean to marry her?"

"That is my intention. She's a fine-looking little woman, not yet forty, and she just suits my idea of a second Mrs. Plunkett."

"And how do you think you suit her, eh?" said the postmaster's companion, with another chuckle. "I reckon she ain't exactly ready to take you for better or worse, or you wouldn't be so anxious to destroy her two thousand bushels of one-dollar-and-fifteen-cent wheat. It seems like an awful waste of good money, Plunkett; but I s'pose you've got to turn the screws on her, or she and the farm, too, will slip out of your grasp. You're a hard man, Plunkett, to run up against. I wouldn't like to owe you money I couldn't pay when the time came around."

"Don't get so gay, Monks," objected the Eden storekeeper. "I'm going to pay you well for this night's work, so you haven't any right to amuse yourself at my expense."

"Touchy, are you?" laughed the man called Monks. "I like to have my little joke, Plunkett. Kind of keeps me in good humor, I reckon. I see the rain is easing up a bit. What time do you s'pose it is?"

The postmaster pulled out his watch and then lit a match to consult it.

As the match flared up the boys held their breath and sat like two statues, for the light, while it lasted, plainly revealed their presence in the shanty.

But the backs of the two men were turned squarely upon them, and, as they did not turn around, having no suspicion that any one but their own two selves were in the place, Jack and Joe escaped their observation.

"Ten o'clock," reported Mr. Plunkett.

"I s'pose we'd better not make a move for an hour yet, to make sure. Most of the people hereabout turn in about nine, and eleven is a good time to get busy. Has Mrs. Harper got a dog about the place?"

"Yes, but we ought to be able to avoid it. You have the tools with you, haven't you, to force an entrance through the back door?"

"I reckon I have. I ain't a professional house-breaker, you know, but I can open a door or window or stab a lock with the best of them. The knack comes natural to me. I was always clever at getting at the inside of things."

"Well, it isn't a hard job to get inside a barn, Monks, and this barn isn't any different to speak of from any other in the county. They're all built on the same plan. Once we're inside we'll have the game in our hands. Inside of ten minutes we'll have fired it in a dozen places. Mrs. Harper will sell no wheat this year, and before Christmas she'll be Mrs. Plunkett, or the farm will have a new tenant. In any case, it will have become my property, and that young cub, Jack Frost, will have to look for a living elsewhere."

Mr. Plunkett wound up his little speech with a venomous intensity that showed he meant every word of it.

At that moment something extraordinary happened.

The old, rickety box on which Jack and Joe were seated suddenly gave way without warning, precipitating the two boys backward against the wall of the shack with a loud crash.

They struck the time-worn boards with a shock that shook the shanty.

The wood, being rotten and insecurely held by the rusty nails, yielded in turn, and the boys fell outside in a heap, and did not stop rolling until they butted up against the trees at the foot of the incline back of the old shack.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Beaseley, scrambling to his feet. "Was that an earthquake?"

"Hardly," laughed Frost, spitting out a mouthful of moist earth.

"Then what happened?"

"Why, don't you know?"

"Something gave way all at once. Maybe the shanty collapsed."

"No. You can see it standing there in the same old place."

"Then I give it up."

"Why, the box gave way under us, we fell through the back of the shanty and rolled down here, a dozen feet away. I wonder what Mr. Plunkett and his friend Monks thought about it. We must have given them a great shock," and the boy chuckled as he pictured in his mind the consternation of the two rascals.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### ON GUARD.

"Our clothes are in a nice state," grumbled Beaseley, picking off bits of damp soil from the front of his packet as well as he could in the dark.

"Don't mention it, Joe," replied Jack, ruefully. "And they're our go-to-meeting togs at that."

"Hush!" whispered his companion. "That rascally Plunkett and his associate are investigating the cause of our mishap. I saw the flash of a match in the hole we punctured in the snack."

"Let's get back among the trees here, so they won't discover us," suggested Jack, and that plan was adopted.

It had almost stopped raining, but that fact didn't interest the boys as much as it had done previous to their tumble.

Their garments were a sight, and would have to be renovated before they could hope to put them on again; so a little superabundance of moisture didn't matter much now.

"Isn't that Nathan Plunkett an old scoundrel?" said Joe, when they had retired within the shelter of the little wood.

"I should say he is," answered Jack. "I never liked him, but I did not believe him to be so bad as to originate such a dastardly scheme as burning down our barn so as to destroy the two thousand bushels of wheat stored there and thus get my aunt's property in his clutches. He's a double-dyed rascal, if there ever was one."

"It's a mighty good thing we overheard those two skunks talking. Now we can put a spoke into their wheels. We'd better start right off for your barn and stand watch around the place. If we can catch old Plunkett at this little game I guess he stands a pretty good chance of going to jail."

"I should think he would," replied Jack, earnestly.

"He isn't very sweet on you, by the way he talks," snickered Joe.

"I've known that for some time. He's down on me because I'm making the farm pay. He had the idea at first that I would run it into the ground and thus tighten his grip on the property. As soon as he found out we were harvesting such a fine crop of wheat it broke him all up. He's been dead sore on me ever since."

"Maybe he'll be afraid to attempt to carry out his plan to-night, after what has happened," said Beaseley, as they were approaching the rear of the big barn where Mrs. Harper's grain was stored. "He must suspect that somebody was in the shanty all the time he and his companion were talking and, of course, overheard their conversation. I'll bet he's in a blue funk over it."

"Well, I'm not going to take any chances, if I have to stay up all night and watch," replied Jack, in a determined tone.

"I wouldn't, either. It's better to be sure than sorry," agreed Joe. "I'm willing to keep you company."

"I'm much obliged, Joe; but this isn't your funeral, and I have no right to ask you to lose your night's rest."

"Ho! Don't you s'pose I've got interest in your wheat, too? I've put nearly three days of good, solid work on that raft because I expect to have a high old time sailing down the rivers on it. If that wheat should happen to be destroyed, all my labor and all my prospects of the good time I've been dreaming over would go up with it. No, free, bold! I can't afford to get it in the neck that way. I feel just like giving Mr. Plunkett one, two, three on the nut for contemplating such a rascally scheme," squaring off at an imaginary antagonist.

"We'll give him worse than that if we catch him at the trick," nodded Jack, in a tone which meant no good to the postmaster.

The boys took their position under the shadow of a small



tool-house, where they commanded all approaches to the big barn, and patiently awaited developments.

They conversed in low tones, while they kept their bright eyes wide open for suspicious interlopers.

An hour passed away and nothing turned up.

The rain-clouds were breaking up and passing away to the westward.

"There's the moon," exclaimed Joe, pointing to a ragged patch of the blue sky where the bright luminary was struggling to show herself through the flying scud. "We'll have a clear day to-morrow, after all."

"Looks like it," replied Jack, cheerfully. "Judging by the position of the moon, I should think it was getting on to midnight. I guess Mr. Plunkett has given up his project for to-night, possibly for good. If he believes that his plan was overheard at the old shanty, you may depend on it he'll be pretty shy of putting his head into a noose."

They stuck it out another hour, and then both the boys began to feel decidedly sleepy.

The croak of the frog, and other droning noises of the night, produced a somnolent effect upon them, their heads dropped drowsily forward, and in a very short time both were sound asleep.

And, while they slept, Mr. Plunkett and his companion Monks, fully persuaded that there had been eavesdroppers in the old shack while they were discussing their rascally plot, were beating it as fast as their legs could carry them to town.

The boys, in spite of their uncomfortable condition, slept right on through the balance of the night, until John Gray, the hired man, coming out at daybreak, found them there, much to his amazement.

He woke them up and inquired why they had anchored themselves for the night in that spot instead of seeking their beds like all good Christians do.

"Good gracious! Is it morning already?" ejaculated Jack, jumping to his feet in surprise. "We must have been asleep."

"I should say you had been. I found you both as sound as a bell," said Gray.

"And the barn!" almost gasped Frost, casting his eyes in the direction of the big granary.

"What about the barn?" asked the hired man, in a puzzled tone.

"Thank goodness! It is safe," cried Jack, fervently.

"Safe! You didn't think it was about to run away, did you?" said Gray, quizzically.

"We were afraid it would do worse than that," interjected Joe, solemnly.

"Oh, come now, boys. You haven't got your eyes open yet, or your wits about you."

"Haven't we? That's all you know about it," retorted Beaseley, in a nettled tone.

"The fact of the matter is, we sat down here to watch the barn, because we had good reason to fear that it would be burned down last night," explained Jack.

"Burned down!" exclaimed the hired man, in some astonishment. "Impossible!"

"Is that a?" replied Joe.

Then Jack told Gray how they had overheard Nathan Plunkett and a companion, whom he called Monks, in the shanty on the edge of the woods, where they had taken shelter from the rain on their way home, talking over their plan to destroy the granary.

"You don't mean to say that you actually heard Mr. Plunkett discussing such a criminal project?"

"That's just what I do mean to say," answered Jack, stoutly. "And I can prove it by Joe here."

"Surely you must have dreamed it all," replied Gray, incredulously, who, though he had no especial liking for the partmaster of Helen, could hardly credit the news that the storekeeper would connect himself with such a discreditable scheme.

"No, we didn't dream it all," chipped in Beaseley.

"I should say we didn't. Whether you believe it or not, it's the fact. You didn't think we'd stand guard out here on a damp night just for the fun of the thing? Nathan Plunkett is a rascal, and I'm going to let my aunt know just what sort of man he is. Come on, Joe."

Mrs. Harper was very much astonished when Jack submitted to her at the breakfast table his report of Mr. Plunkett's character and his rascally intentions toward her.

"It seems almost incredible," she said, with a painful expression.

"He seems determined to force you to marry him, and get the farm to boot, auntie."

"I wouldn't marry Mr. Plunkett if he was the last man on earth," she answered, indignantly; "even if I had any idea of ever marrying again, which I haven't. I thought I made that fact sufficiently plain to Mr. Plunkett when he proposed to me."

"Never mind, auntie," said Jack, reassuringly. "Don't let Mr. Plunkett worry you. I believe he'll keep kind of shady for a while, as I guess we gave him a good scare last night. He can't have the least idea who was in the old shanty while he and Monks were there, and that fact will keep him guessing, and make him rather shy of showing his face in this neighborhood again."

"I hope so. I never want to see his face again. When the mortgage comes due I'm going to send the money to him by you."

"All right, auntie. It would do me lots of good to see how reluctantly he will let go his hold on the farm."

Jack got his hat, left the house and made a bee-line for the anchorage of the raft.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE GOLDEN HOPE.

Frost found Beaseley already at the basin waiting for him.

"Well, I'm ready for business," he said, with a cheerful expression.

"I see you are," replied Jack, producing a rude plan of the house they were to erect on the raft. "We'll begin by measuring off the dimensions upon the deck."

They walked across the plank which connected the unwieldy-looking raft with the shore.

Jack measured off ten feet from the extreme point of the rounded stern and made a cross on the boards with a piece of red chalk.

"Bring me that piece of scantling, Joe."

Beaseley brought it.

Jack laid it down across the deck, told his companion to hold one end in position, and then drew a straight line from the starboard side of the raft to the port side, intersecting the cross.

He then measured off a foot and a half at each end and marked the spots.

"Come forward, Joe."

The performance was repeated within five feet of the point of the bow.

A line was then drawn fore and aft on either side of the deck, connecting the foot-and-a-half marks upon the cross-line.

The parallelogram thus outlined formed the exact dimensions of the proposed house.

"Now we'll lay down a new floor twelve by twenty-five feet," said Jack. "It will be raised six inches above the deck. We'll use a double layer, crossed, of those slabs for the foundation and then board it over."

That provided a couple of hours' work for them, and they proceeded to get busy without loss of time.

On account of the previous night's rain there was a good deal of moisture in the air—humidity, the scientists call it, and the boys felt the effects of it, for they were soon perspiring.

"Gee whiz!" cried Joe, wiping his forehead, "it's blamed hot this morning."

"No hotter than Saturday, old man, but we feel it more, that's all."

"It's hot for the second week in September, if you want to know."

"If we're going to put this building through in record time you don't want to let a little thing like that bother you," grinned Jack.

"I can stand it as long as you can," retorted Joe, beginning to nail down the planks like a good fellow.

There was plenty of lumber of the kind the boys wanted, and more was coming all the time down the stream which ran through the swamp.

The floor and the framework of the house was completed that day, the skeleton well secured and braced to the deck.

Next day the sides and ends were boarded up, leaving no openings whatever in the structure.

On the ensuing day the skeleton of the sloping roof, extending a foot beyond the house line, so that when boarded over it would shed the rain, if they encountered any, was put in place.

Thursday was devoted to completing the roof, in which a big hole was left, to which a cover was fitted, for receiving their cargo of grain.



Jack developed a simple but ingenious method for making the roof water-tight for a limited time—considerably longer than they expected to have any occasion to use the boat.

He applied the same process to the sides, thus furnishing a secure receptacle for the wheat in transit.

On Friday they built the deck-house, as Jack called it—a compartment five by twelve feet and eight feet high, with an opening to be shut in, if necessary, by a piece of sailcloth.

Next morning Jack drove in to Eden, paid a flying visit to the Earles, and afterward purchased ten good-sized and stoutly hooped liquor barrels, which he brought back to the farm.

That afternoon he and Joe attached five of the barrels securely on either side of the raft by means of stout ropes, nailed into the casks to prevent them from slipping.

Before sundown the novel household was completed and ready to receive her cargo, now quoted at one dollar and thirty-five cents a bushel.

Jack viewed it with pardonable pride, as the creation of his own intelligence, while Joe regarded it as the vehicle which was to provide them both with a fortnight or so of rare good fun and adventure.

"Now, let's christen it, Jack," he cried, enthusiastically.

"What shall we call it?" asked the chief constructor, thoughtfully.

"The Jack Frost. How will that do?" grinned Joe.

"Go on, you're foolish," replied his friend. "We'll call it the Golden Hope. That will be somewhat appropriate."

"All right, let her go at that. Three cheers for the Golden Hope," he cried, flinging his hat into the air and cheering, in which performance he was joined, but in a more dignified way, by Jack.

"On Monday we'll pole the craft around to the little wharf on the creek, and there we'll load her to the hatches, as the sailors say."

"And then we'll cut loose from our moorings and gently glide down stream, eh?" grinned Joe, in high glee. "Bet your life when we pass Eden we'll be piped off to the queen's taste."

"I've no doubt we'll be an object of interest to the curious," laughed Jack.

"You haven't given the snap away to your aunt yet, have you?"

Jack shook his head.

"No; I wanted to surprise her with the completed boat."

"You'll surprise her all right. I hope she won't make a kick against trusting the grain aboard of her," said Joe, getting solemn all of a sudden, such an alarming possibility occurring to him now for the first time.

"Don't worry about that," replied Jack, cheerfully. "Auntie trusts me implicitly. If I say it's perfectly safe, my word will go."

"I'd have a fit if there should be any hitch at this stage of the game," said Beaseley, so earnestly that Jack had to laugh at him.

"There's no danger of the Golden Hope floating away from her anchorage between this and Monday, is there?" asked Joe, anxiously.

"Not a bit more than there was all along," answered Jack.

"This stout rope holds the boat securely. Besides, she's well inside the bight, and I don't believe would move to any extent until poled out into the current of the stream."

"I'm glad to hear it. I wouldn't sleep a wink if I thought there was a chance of the craft getting adrift."

After dinner next day Jack brought his aunt down to the basin to introduce her to the odd-looking boat, the history of which he had told her on the way to church, much to her astonishment.

"And do you really think that boat is stable enough to carry our wheat all the way to St. Louis, Jack?" Mrs. Harper asked, somewhat doubtfully, as she viewed the unwieldy marine contrivance.

"As sure as you live, auntie. She'll carry every bushel with perfect safety, save you a good many dollars in freight and furnish a couple of weeks' outing on the water for Joe and I."

Jack showed her over the craft, though there wasn't much to see, and she praised her nephew's ingenuity and pluck in putting the craft together.

Later on Jack brought John Gray down to look at the "Golden Hope."

The hired man, who had had some experience in river craft of this order, examined the raft-boat with much curiosity and interest.

"Well," he said, after he had ascertained the object for which she was intended, "she's buoyant enough to carry the

wheat to the Gulf, if necessary. You've got a great head to be able to build so substantial a craft out of fugitive lumber in two weeks. If you are satisfied that you and your friend Beaseley can navigate the craft between you as well as you have put it together, you ought to be able to get your wheat to St. Louis freight free all right."

"We can do that all right," replied the boy, confidently.

"It's something of a risk. I advise you to have your cargo insured before you start."

"I mean to do it, if it doesn't cost too much. I don't think there's risk enough to warrant a high premium."

"You can't tell. It's the unexpected which must be provided against, and the only way to offset that is by insurance. Then your mind will feel easier, and your aunt will be more satisfied."

And Jack fully agreed with him.

## CHAPTER X.

### UNDESIRABLE VISITORS.

On Monday morning the "Golden Hope" was poled around to the wharf on the creek, two extra hands were hired and the loading of the wheat aboard of her begun.

While this work was in progress Jack and Joe rigged up a steering apparatus at the stern, which, when completed, was examined by John Gray, who declared it was strong and serviceable enough to answer the purpose required.

Stout scantlings, six feet long, were nailed at intervals along the projecting edge of the deck and braced up against the superstructure, and to these uprights a long length of clothes-line was attached to form a kind of protecting railing all around the raft-boat, so the boys might pass from stern to stem, on either side, without fear of falling into the water, unless through carelessness.

The cooking apparatus, a small stove in a shallow box of sand, was next provided.

Then Jack drove to Eden and purchased the provisions for the trip and a few cooking utensils; the balance of the outfit was furnished by Mrs. Harper herself, who had begun to take a lively interest in the expedition.

The raft-boat stood the weight of her cargo in great shape, sinking gradually as ton after ton was shot into her big deck-house.

Her buoyancy was carefully investigated at intervals, and when half her load was aboard she had still two inches of displacement to her credit, according to Jack's calculations.

At last the final bushel was aboard, and so closely had the bright boy figured that practically she was loaded clear up to her hatches.

She rode the water three inches higher than Jack had expected, and that fact was a cause of much rejoicing all around.

There was now no longer any doubt but she would bear the grain safely to her port of destination, accidents or mismanagement alone excepted.

Jack made arrangements with an insurance agent to come out to the farm, view the boat and figure upon a two weeks' marine insurance.

After the agent had examined the raft-boat and taken the testimony in the case he decided the risk was too great to accept at a sum which the assured would be willing to pay, and expressed himself to that effect, much to Mrs. Harper's disappointment.

It is probable that the agent, when he returned to Eden, spread the intelligence about the "Golden Hope" about town, for quite a number of curious people drove out to the farm and asked permission to look at the craft.

Among these was the assistant editor of the Eden "Daily News," and next day the whole town knew about Jack Frost's enterprise.

The story, however, was highly complimentary of the boy's ingenuity and enterprise, and the editor took occasion also to mention the lad's pluck and nerve as shown at the recent fire where he had saved the Earle girls from an awful death.

This publicity was rather annoying than otherwise to Jack Frost, but he had to put up with it, nevertheless.

Ever since the raft-boat had gone into commission Joe Beaseley slept on board of her.

In fact, he could hardly tear himself away from her to go to his meals.

Mr. Greene allowed him a full month's vacation, and he declared he was going to extract pleasure out of every minute of it, except, of course, when he was asleep.

The loading of the wheat was finished late Wednesday after-



noon, and it was decided to sail on the following morning at sunrise.

After the sun set the wind rose somewhat, and the waters of the creek ruffled up enough to cause the raft-boat to strain slightly at her cable.

Clouds began to pile up in the sky, and before eight o'clock the conditions looked stormy and unpropitious.

Joe ate his supper with Jack, and then both boys returned to the Golden Hope.

Jack had purchased two lanterns—one with red glass, the other with green—which he proposed to display at night on either side of the boat, above the roof of the deckhouse, after they had started upon their trip down the rivers.

In addition, he brought aboard that night an ordinary white-glass lantern used about the farm.

"Let's rig up the lanterns to-night, just for the fun of the thing," suggested Joe. "It will look kind of shipshape, you know."

Jack fell in with the idea, and the lanterns were accordingly run up on their respective poles—the green on the starboard side, the red on the port.

"Now we look like the real thing," said Joe, with one of his cheerful grins. "Gee! It's beginning to blow some, isn't it?"

The white lantern was intended to illuminate the small deck-house.

The boys, however, did not think it necessary to light it on this occasion.

They sat together in the little cabin, as Joe called it, and talked about the trip they were to enter on the next day.

At length they grew weary, and Joe said he guessed it was time to turn in.

Jack didn't propose to roost on board when he had a comfortable room to go to, so he bade Joe good-night and started for the house, a third of a mile away.

He had gone about half the distance when he thought he heard voices.

He stopped and listened.

The wind made a good deal of noise through the trees, but at the same time it brought the sound down to him.

He was presently aware that two men were approaching him, going in the direction of the creek where the raft-boat was moored.

He didn't know of anybody that had a right to be abroad on their property at that hour of the night, so their presence interested him considerably, and he determined to lie in wait for them, and, if possible, see who they were and find out what they were doing in that locality.

So he stepped back into the bushes and waited for the two men to come up.

There was no moon to aid him, and the sky was overcast and gusty-looking.

However, he knew all his neighbors so well that he believed he could identify the intruders if they came near enough to him to afford him a good look.

The voices approached closer and closer, and the tones of one had a familiar ring to the boy.

Soon the two men came out from the shadow of the trees and passed within a few feet of Jack.

There was not sufficient light for him to distinguish their features, but he knew them for all that.

They were Nathan Plunkett and the man by the name of Monks, and from the few words he picked out of their conversation Jack realized they were going down to the creek to look up the raft-boat and see if they could put it out of business.

"So that's the game you're on, Nathan Plunkett?" muttered Frost, wrathfully. "I'll see that you'll get all that's coming to you if you try to damage my boat. No doubt you fancy the craft is left to itself at night, because two-legged serpents like yourself are not common in the neighborhood. I'll just follow after you and see what didos you try to cut up. I'll have you in the rear, while Joe, who sleeps with one eye open ever since he established himself on board, will take you in the front. I'll bet we won't do a thing to you both."

Thus thought Jack as he followed the pair of rascals as fast as he dared go.

The creek was reached at last, and Frost saw Plunkett and his companion standing a few feet away from the Golden Hope, examining her with a great deal of attention.

Finally they stepped on board, and Plunkett, drawing aside the canvas covering which partly screened the opening to the cabin, looked into the place.

He made a motion to Monks, who came to his side and looked in also.

Jack judged they were looking at Joe, who, as he made no movement to resent the intrusion, was doubtless fast asleep.

The rascals consulted together.

They soon reached a decision, which evidently involved Beaseley, for they immediately pushed their way into the little deckhouse.

"They mean to do Joe up," breathed Jack. "It's time for me to butt in."

He grabbed a stout stick which lay close to him on the ground and dashed on board the raft-boat.

There was a struggle going on in the cabin.

Jack could hear some pretty strong language being used by the postmaster and Monks, but Joe didn't seem to be uttering a sound.

"I'm afraid they're getting the best of him," thought Frost, as he reached the deckhouse entrance. "I wish there was a light burning, so I could see how things look inside."

Evidently somebody else had the same desire to throw a light on the situation, for at that very moment a match was ignited, and by its glare Jack saw that it was Plunkett who had lit a lucifer and held it in his fingers, and he also made out that the two men had Beaseley face down on the deck, the storekeeper kneeling on his back, while Monks, who was a smoothly shaven, youngish-looking man, had one of his hands over the boy's mouth.

As the match expired in the storekeeper's fingers Jack dashed in and struck him a stunning blow on the head with his cudgel.

Plunkett fell half-dazed against the bunk out of which they had pulled Joe.

Jack followed up his advantage by rapping Monks in a similar manner, though the blow was not so effectual.

The fellow, however, was obliged to release his grip on Beaseley.

Joe, finding he was no longer held at a serious disadvantage, struggled to his feet, encouraged by Jack's voice, and the two boys attacked the intruders in right down earnest.

## CHAPTER XI.

### OFF AT LAST.

The scrimmage which ensued in the gloom of the contracted deckhouse was sharp, short and decisive.

Monks soon had all he wanted of it.

Managing to extricate himself, he fled to the shore as fast as his legs could carry him and disappeared in the direction he and his companion had come.

It was different with Plunkett.

Jack's blow had put him out of business, and he became an easy victim.

Frost struck a match and flashed the light in the postmaster's eyes.

"Well, Mr. Plunkett," he said, coolly, "what have you to say for yourself?"

The storekeeper evidently had nothing to say for himself, for he only scowled back at Jack and remained silent.

While Joe blocked Plunkett's retreat by the doorway, Jack took down the lantern and lighted it.

This cast a welcome illumination on the situation.

"Jack and I would be glad to know why you have honored us with your presence at this late hour of the night," said Jack, sarcastically.

"Let me pass, you young rascals," demanded Mr. Plunkett, aggressively.

"Certainly," replied Frost, with mock politeness, "after you have explained why you and your friend Monks boarded this raft and attacked my friend Joe Beaseley."

The postmaster flashed him an evil look.

"You young villain!" he exclaimed, vindictively. "You struck me with that stick you have in your hand. I'll have you in jail for assault the first thing in the morning."

"All right," replied the boy, cheerfully. "Do so, if you think it will pay you. But I guess we'll have something to say about your designs on this cargo of wheat which will make you look like thirty cents, and maybe land you in a cell."

"How dare you talk that way to me?" sputtered Mr. Plunkett.

"You can't work any bluffs on me, Mr. Plunkett," said Jack, sternly. "We've caught you in a mighty small piece of business, and we also know what brought you and Monks around here a week ago Sunday night. Somebody heard all that passed between you and your companion that night in the old shanty, and you were both recognized. I have evidence enough to cause the arrest of both of you, and I guess I could make it pretty hot for you if I chose to do so. If you know when you're well off you'll keep away for good from this farm. When your mortgage falls due it will be paid in full; after that we don't want anything to do with you. Let him go, Joe."



Both boys stepped aside so the postmaster of Eden could pass out of the deck-house.

He never uttered a word as he took advantage of his opportunity.

He was cornered and beaten to a standstill, and he knew it.

But for all that he was just as dangerous as ever, and a desire for revenge rankled deep down in his heart.

He stepped ashore in sulky defiance, and the last the boys saw of him was when his tall form vanished into the gloom of the night.

"I guess we'd better stand watch by turns to-night," said Jack. "I can't afford to take any chances with a pair of rascals like those two around loose in this neighborhood. They are capable of doing a heap of mischief in their present humor if they get the ghost of a chance."

Joe thought so, too, so for the rest of the night the boys in turn stood guard two hours at a stretch, until the morning sun brought the hired man down to tell them that an early breakfast awaited them at the farmhouse.

Leaving Gray to watch the raft-boat, the boys went to the house, where they found Mrs. Harper waiting for them.

After the meal she accompanied them to the wharf to see the boat off on its voyage which was to carry it down the "Father of Waters" to the city of St. Louis.

The boys stepped aboard the raft-boat, and each took up a long pole as John Gray released the ropes which held the bow and stern of the craft to the wharf.

As she began to move forward of her own accord, Jack took his place at the helm, and then both boys shouted farewell to Mrs. Harper and John Gray on the shore, waving their hats gleefully.

Jack's aunt and the hired man waved their hands in return, and now the river voyage had actually begun.

"Down the river, down the river, down the O-hi-o!" howled Joe, feeling a strong desire to stand on his head through sheer happiness.

"You mean 'Down the creek, down the creek, down to the Chippewa,' don't you, Joe?" laughed Jack.

"Sure I do. I mean any old thing that fits into the situation. Ain't there anything for me to do? Must I stand around with my hands in my pockets till my turn comes to steer?"

"I guess you can find something to do. You want to coll up those ropes John tossed aboard and make things shipshape."

"Aye, aye, Cap'n Frost," grinned Joe, and he started to obey orders at once.

Jack was prepared to find that the raft-boat would display a strong tendency to whirl around in the current of the creek, which was fairly rapid, and was now carrying them down toward Eden and the junction of Chippewa at a satisfactory speed.

Although the young navigator had yet to learn even the art of managing a craft, he soon found that the difficulty of keeping the craft head-on could readily be overcome by practice.

A kind of "crow's nest" had been built on top of the small deckhouse, where the boys would have to take up their post, turn about, in order to keep a lookout ahead.

Joe was the first, of course, to mount the "roost," as he called it.

He couldn't get lonesome, for he was within easy talking distance of Jack.

It was a nice, airy spot, and afforded an excellent view of the surrounding landscape.

There was small danger of the raft meeting with any other craft, unless it might be a rowboat, on the creek.

The stream was fairly broad and deep all the way to its junction with the Chippewa, five miles away.

"This is simply great, Jack," cried Joe. "We're going down faster than I thought we would."

"How do you like it up there?"

"Fine. I can see a mile straight ahead, and there isn't anything in the way."

"The creek runs nearly straight the entire way to Eden," replied Frost.

"I know it does. I went down once about a year ago on a sailboat."

It was nearly seven o'clock when they approached the steeples of Eden.

As they floated past the town they became an object of interest and curiosity to a good many people, especially the boys of the neighborhood, who began to flock to the shore in considerable numbers as the news of the approach of the house-raft spread.

"Get whiz!" grinned Joe. "Those kids act as if they'd never seen anything like this before in their lives."

"I don't believe they ever have," laughed Jack.

"Hi, hi, hi!" came out hails from the water-front of Eden from the youngsters, who were following the course of the raft as they might a street procession.

"There are some girls waving their hands and handkerchiefs at us," said Joe, standing up and saluting the fair ones with his broad-brimmed hat.

"I see them," answered Frost, taking off his hat and bowing to the young ladies.

"I tell you, this is all to the mustard," said Beaseley, tickled to death over the sensation their appearance created.

"Come now, Joe," warned Jack. "You don't want to forget to attend to business. We're sliding into the Chippewa, and we may run foul of something if you don't keep your weather eye lifting."

"Nothing in the way, old man. We'll be in the river in a minute."

Jack knew that from the swing of the raft.

In spite of all he could do, the raft was getting around broad-on to the current where it emptied into the Chippewa.

"Come down and lend a hand, will you, Joe?" he asked his assistant.

"Sure I will," replied Beaseley, cheerfully.

He quickly descended from his perch and gave Frost the benefit of his powerful muscles.

Together they managed to prevent the raft from turning completely around, as she surely otherwise would have done.

In a few minutes the Golden Hope was fairly launched into the middle of the more rapidly flowing Chippewa, and the raft floated along at a faster rate.

"It's seven o'clock," said Jack. "You may take a spell at the steering gear. You want to see that you keep her head pointed straight down the river. I'll keep you posted. You won't find the job very easy till you get some experience."

He relinquished the rudder pole to his companion and mounted himself to the lookout.

Joe's first efforts were somewhat discouraging.

"What's the matter with the blamed old raft, anyway? I can feel it trying to swing the wrong way every minute," grumbled Beaseley.

Jack laughed, and then handed him down some advice based on the experience he had accumulated during the trip down the creek.

"I guess it's harder down here on the Chippewa," mumbled Beaseley.

At that moment Jack saw a rowboat, with a couple of girls and a boy on board, put out from one of the small wharves and make directly for the raft-boat.

## CHAPTER XII.

### MISS VIRGINIA EARLE VISITS THE GOLDEN HOPE.

"I wonder who they are?" thought Frost. "They are rowing directly for us."

As the rowboat came nearer, and the faces of the girls became plainer, Jack uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

He recognized Virginia Earle and her sister Jessie.

"Hello, Joe!" he cried.

"Hello yourself," replied the stout boy, whose attention was fully occupied with his efforts to keep the raft straight.

"We're going to have visitors."

"Visitors!" ejaculated Beaseley, in surprise, letting go of the rudder-pole and rushing to the starboard side of the craft.

"Here, here!" shouted Jack. "Get back to your post, Joe, or we'll be stern-on in a moment."

He jumped down to help his companion regain control of the unwieldy boat.

When this had been accomplished, he warned Beaseley against deserting the steering gear again, and then walked over to the side to welcome the Earle girls.

"Good-morning, Miss Earle," he said, politely lifting his hat.

"Good-morning, Mr. Frost. We've come out to see the Golden Hope," she laughed.

"Joe and myself appreciate the honor you have conferred upon us by getting up so early to see us off."

"Do you?"

"Sure we do," chipped in Beaseley, as the boat came close up to the raft's stern quarter.

"May we come aboard, Mr. Frost?" asked Virginia.

"Of course you may, and stay as long as you choose."

"Oh, we can only stay a few minutes. We don't want to be carried too far down the river, you know."

Jack assisted the two girls to the deck, after he had lashed the boat fast alongside by her painter, and the boy who had rowed them out stepped on board without any help.



"This is my cousin, Tom Waldron," said Virginia, introducing their companion.

"Glad to make your acquaintance, Tom. Let me make you known to my crew, Joe Beaseley."

The two boys shook hands.

"You're going all the way to St. Louis, aren't you?" said Waldron.

"That's what we are," replied Jack.

"I wish I were going along with you," he answered, wistfully.

"I wish you were, too," replied Frost, cheerfully.

"I wouldn't mind taking such a trip myself," smiled Virginia. "I suppose you expect to have a fine time?"

"We're going to have barrels of fun," grinned Beaseley.

"Boys do have such an advantage over us girls."

"You see now you made a mistake by being born a girl," chuckled Joe.

"I'm afraid I didn't have any say in the matter," replied Virginia, roguishly.

"I'm glad I ain't a girl, all right."

"Would you like to climb up to the crow's-nest, Miss Earle?" asked Jack, pointing to the lookout platform. "I'll help you up. You'll get a splendid view from there."

"Oh, my, is that what you call that place?"

"Yes. That's where we keep our lookout ahead."

"I don't know if I can get up there or not," she replied, doubtfully.

"Oh, yes, you can. Just give me your hand. It's only a short ladder, you see."

Thus encouraged, she permitted the young navigator to help her up.

"Isn't it grand!" she exclaimed, looking up and down and across the river. "I should just love to stay here all morning. It's almost as nice as being on a steamboat. So you and Joe Beaseley actually built this boat between you," she added, looking at him admiringly. "Aren't you too smart for anything?"

"Now, Miss Earle—" protested Jack, though secretly delighted at her commendation.

"I mean it," she insisted. "My father says you're the smartest and bravest boy in Eden County, and I fully agree with him. I should be a most ungrateful girl if I didn't," she added, earnestly, and with a look into the boy's eyes which sent his blood leaping through his veins at a great rate. "For you saved my life in the most heroic manner, as well as the life of my dear sister."

"I can't deny that," stammered Jack, finding that words came very slow to him under the bewitching influence of her presence. "All I can say is—what I think I have said two or three times before—that I am glad I was able to help you when you needed help. I would do the same thing again for you if that were necessary."

"Thank you," she replied, casting down her eyes. "I believe you."

"I hope you will go out and call on my aunt while I am away. She thinks you the nicest—"

"Now you are getting complimentary," Virginia laughed.

"Oh, no," protested Jack. "It's the truth, because I think so, too," he added desperately.

She blushed up to her eyes and looked away.

"You will promise me that you will call at the farm, won't you?" he insisted, capturing one of her hands.

"Yes, since you wish it," she answered, in a low tone.

"Thank you."

"How long do you expect to be away?" she asked, presently.

"I can't say exactly. Probably two weeks or more."

"Well, I shall expect to see you just as soon as you get back. I shall want to hear all about your trip."

"I will not fail to call," replied the boy.

"I should be very much disappointed if you delayed your visit too long."

"Then I shall look to see you a day or two after you get back, remember," she said, archly. "Now, please help me down. We really must go ashore right away. We haven't had our breakfast yet, and I know Tom will object to a long pull on an empty stomach."

Jack assisted her to the deck with as much care as though she were a princess of royal blood.

"Come, Jessie, Tom; it's time we put out for the shore. We must be all of half a mile below Eden."

They embarked, Jack doing the honors.

"Good-by, boys," cried Virginia, as her cousin, Tom Waldron, shoved the rowboat clear. "I hope you'll have a splendid time."

"Thanks, Miss Earle," replied Jack.

"Good-by, fellows. I'm dead sorry I'm not with you," floated back from Waldron, as he headed the boat to the shore and bent to his oars in a sturdy fashion.

Jack mounted once more to the lookout and noted that the river was clear as far ahead as he could see.

At eight o'clock the boys changed places again, the arrangement being one-hour spells for each alternately at the helm.

At twelve o'clock when Jack took his turn at steering, Joe started in to cook a pot of coffee.

An inverted box served them for a table, on which some meat sandwiches, a whole pie and other "fixings" were spread out.

"Grub is ready," announced Joe in twenty minutes.

He squatted down on the deck, while Jack took his meal standing, as it was out of the question to leave the helm to itself for any length of time.

"This isn't so bad," said Beaseley, cheerfully. "These sandwiches beat anything I've tested in a dog's age."

"They're all to the good, old man. Aunt Lucy has the knack of making the boss sandwiches on record. And her pies make one's mouth water just to look at them."

"You bet they do," acquiesced his companion. "This is a peach pie, I guess. If there's one pie I like better than another it is peach."

"I thought mince was your favorite?" grinned Jack.

"That's right. I forgot. Mince always goes to the right spot."

"How about pumpkin? I heard you say once that pumpkin pies were first favorites with you."

"Oh, come now, don't make me think of all the delicacies that I like. Almost all kinds of pie look alike to me when I come to eat them."

"You'd make a good pie-rate, wouldn't you?" laughed Jack.

"Sure pop. We ought to have brought a black flag with a skull and cross-bones painted on it to hoist at our masthead."

"What do you call our masthead?"

"One of those uprights on which we're going to display our colored lights when it grows dark."

Joe cleared away and washed the dishes, and then hied himself up to the crow's nest, from which perch he chinned with Jack until his companion called him down to steer for an hour.

"I guess I've got the hang of the thing now," said Beaseley. "By the time we reach the Mississippi I'll be able to steer with my eyes shut."

They passed one river steamboat about three o'clock, but she was only a small affair, a freighter.

Altogether the river seemed to be singularly clear of boats or vessels of any description.

The sun set about six, and shortly afterward Joe piped to supper.

At seven the colored lights were hoisted into place, and the white light was hung in the lookout station, exactly between the other lanterns.

Darkness gradually settled down deep and solemn over the face of the landscape and river.

There were many lights on either shore to guide them on their way.

"We must be careful to keep to the middle of the stream, as near as we can guess," said Jack, "or the first thing we know we may find ourselves ashore. If the tide happened to be high at the time we'd be in a pretty fix, unless we succeeded in poling ourselves clear right away."

"Get your banjo, Jack, and let's have some music," said Joe.

So Frost got his instrument out of the deck-house, tuned up, and presently the strains of a lively dance were floating on the still evening air.

Then he sang several popular songs, Joe joining in on the chorus.

"Better turn in now, Joe," said Jack, as he relieved his companion at the rudder. "We commence our four-hour watches now. I'll wake you at midnight. Then you are to call me at four."

"I don't feel a bit sleepy. Guess I'll stay awake a while longer."

"You can do as you please, but it's your funeral, you know."

At half-past eight Beaseley took possession of the one bunk and in five minutes was sound asleep.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### ON THE MIGHTY MISSISSIPPI.

Jack Frost was now thoroughly skilled in steering the raft-boat, and consequently found the work merely mechanical.

After Joe went to sleep Jack found time hung rather slow on his hands.



## CHAPTER XV.

## CONCLUSION.

Jack made inquiries early next morning about where he should find commission grain merchants, and was referred to the street where a great many of these merchants had their places of business.

When he and Joe were on their way to the restaurant at which they proposed to breakfast, he bought a couple of morning dailies from a newsboy.

After giving their order at the table, the first thing both the boys did was to look up the price of wheat.

It was quoted at one dollar and sixty cents per bushel.

It didn't take much figuring to show that their load would fetch something over three thousand two hundred dollars, less commission.

"Hadh't we better hold on a few days, Jack? It might rise to one dollar and seventy-five cents, or even two dollars."

"No, Joe. The present price is good enough for me. Aunt Lucy will clear three thousand over all expenses. That's a thousand dollars more than she expected to get."

"All right, Jack. It's your wheat."

"Suppose it was yours?"

"I'd wait two days more, at any rate."

"I'm not taking any chances, Joe, now that I have arrived on the ground. Something might happen to our cargo if I waited."

"Why, what could happen to it now? We're moored to the levee, as they call it, aren't we?"

"Oh, I don't mean to say that I think anything would happen to it, but, you know, the unexpected is always liable to happen."

The words were hardly out of his mouth before he suddenly clutched his companion's arm and looked over his shoulder toward the front of the restaurant.

"What's the matter?" asked Joe, a bit startled at his manner.

"The unexpected has happened, Joe," he whispered.

"What do you mean?"

"Don't look around when I tell you."

"All right," replied Beaseley, beginning to get excited.

"Mr. Plunkett and his friend Monks have just come into the restaurant and have taken the first table."

"Gee whiz! Is that really the fact?"

"It is."

"What the deuce are they doing in St. Louis?"

"I'm afraid they've come here to try and do us up on the wheat."

"Ha! How can they?"

"Now you've got me. We must wait till they've gone, then you must hurry back to the raft and stand watch over it while I rush off and fetch a commission man down to make the sale."

They ate the meal slowly, Jack keeping a sharp eye on the first table, where his enemy and Monks were apparently enjoying their breakfast.

At length the two men rose, went to the counter, settled for the meal and walked out on the street.

"Keep your eye on them, Joe, while I pay these checks."

In half a minute he rejoined his companion outside.

"Which way did they go?" he asked.

"Toward the levee," answered Joe.

"They are on the lookout for the Golden Hope, as sure as you're alive. Now, hustle off with you, and don't let them see you. If they spot our craft, don't let them on board, if you have to slug both of them to prevent it."

"All right, Jack. I'll knock the daylights out of them if they monkey with me."

They parted at once, and Jack took his way to the district where the commission merchants had their stores.

The boy selected one place at random, entered the store and asked to see the head of the house.

He was directed to step into the private office.

He did so, and lost not a moment in stating his business.

"I have two thousand bushels of wheat alongside the levee at the foot of Blank street. Do you want to buy it at the prevailing market rate?" the boy said to the merchant.

"Whom do you represent, Mr. Frost?"

"My aunt, Mrs. Harper, of Eden County, Wisconsin."

"Have you brought the wheat all the way from that State?"

"Yes, sir; by water."

"The wheat is in bulk, of course?"

"Yes, sir. All ready to go to the elevator."

"I will give you one dollar and sixty cents per bushel for it."

"It's yours, sir," said Jack, promptly.

"I'll send a representative with you to examine the grain and, if it is in first-class condition, to close the deal."

"All right, sir."

In five minutes a bright young man was summoned and introduced to Jack.

The merchant gave him his orders, and the young man started for the levee with Jack.

When they reached the foot of Blank street they found a crowd gathered about a certain part of the levee, just at the point where Jack knew the Golden Hope was tied up.

They pushed their way to the front, to find Mr. Plunkett and Monks trying to effect a lodgment on the wheat-boat, while Joe Beaseley was standing them off with the short pole which had done service as a yard for their sail.

Jack rushed to his friend's aid, and in the struggle which ensued Mr. Plunkett was tumbled into the river, from which he was rescued, a melancholy looking object, by a longshoreman.

He and Monks retired from the scene much crestfallen and swearing to take vengeance on the spunky boy.

Jack explained the cause of the scrimmage to the astonished representative of the commission house, who declared the rascals ought to be arrested.

He then examined the wheat, found it came up to all requirements, and the deal was closed.

Arrangements were at once made with the captain of a tug close by to tow the Golden Hope to Elevator D, belonging to a certain big firm, and the young man and the two boys went along.

After the grain had been absorbed and automatically measured by the elevator, the boat was towed back to her former moorings and Jack went back to the store to get the money.

The merchant kindly permitted his young man to accompany Jack to the bank and procure for him a draft on the Eden National Bank for the three thousand odd dollars the wheat came to.

When he returned to the boat he found Joe talking to a stranger.

This man wanted to charter the raft-boat to take a load of lime down to a small town at the junction of the Ohio River, and after some conversation Jack offered to deliver the stuff for a certain sum, which was accepted.

"You'll have to cut a door in your deck-house in order to get your load aboard," said the man.

"I'll have that arranged by the time you get your lime here."

"I'll have it here inside of two hours."

It took the Golden Hope two days to deliver the lime at its destination.

Then, while Jack was wondering what he was going to do with his craft, he received a satisfactory offer for her and accepted it.

That night he and Joe started by express for Eden, Wisconsin, where they arrived in due time, and hustled out at once for the farm.

Jack was received with open arms by his aunt, who complimented him highly on the success of his trip with the wheat to St. Louis.

Mrs. Harper insisted on presenting Jack with two hundred and fifty dollars as a substantial recognition, in addition to his wages, of the interest he displayed in the welfare of the farm.

Jack did not fail to call on Virginia Earle right away after his return, as he had promised to do, and was most graciously received not only by the young lady herself, but by her family as well.

In due time Jack Frost personally took up the mortgage on his aunt's farm and forever relieved her of any further connection with Mr. Nathan Plunkett.

When he reached his eighteenth year his aunt presented him with a half interest in the farm, assuring him that it would all be his at her death.

At twenty-one Jack attended his own wedding in the town of Eden, and the bride was Virginia Earle, just as everybody who had watched the course of events since young Frost returned from his trip to St. Louis in the Golden Hope said it would be.

To-day Jack Frost is one of the most prosperous farmers of Western Wisconsin.

Next week's issue will contain "STRUCK OIL; OR, THE BOY WHO MADE A MILLION."

SEND POSTAL FOR OUR FREE CATALOGUE.



## CURRENT NEWS

Dispatches from Petrograd say the conditions at Lodz, which was captured by the Germans some time ago, are terrible. The population is starving and the people are eating cats and dogs.

The Germans claim that their 42-c.m. gun has been in their hands for six years, though its existence has been concealed until now. An officer of the English army reports having seen the gun at Krupp's some years ago. He was then told that it was a freak gun, not available for use, but this statement may have been part of the policy of concealment.

When a thief drove out of the town of Silverfield, six miles south and four miles east of Goldyke, Nev., with a team of horses belonging to Curley Jones, a mine owner of that place, he took with him the only conveyance in the place, and as a result Jones was compelled to walk thirty-five miles over mountains and desert to notify the sheriff. The theft occurred in broad daylight, while Jones and David Long, a business partner, were at work in their mine.

Twenty members of the Young Ladies' Mission Circle of the Tabernacle Christian Church, Columbus, Ind., have volunteered as nurses for babies brought to that church during the coming year. The young women say that mothers do not attend church because their babies cry and disturb the services. The young women will take charge of all babies taken to the church and will keep them in a room away from the auditorium that no disturbance will be caused the minister or the congregation.

An unusual guest appeared recently at the Stewart Hotel, San Francisco, when a huge grizzly bear, accompanied by Fred Thompson, his owner, and nature man, Joe Knowles, waddled up to the desk and gravely went through the formalities of registering, giving his name as "Baby of the Rockies." After a good feed on lumps of sugar, "Baby," who weighs slightly over 500 pounds, took a trip up the elevator, which he jammed on his way up. Arrived on the seventh floor, "Baby" and escort visited a party of women. The grizzly was captured by Thompson five years ago.

A man who gave the name of Bert Heasted held up Cashier Earl Randall, two other men and a boy at the Bingham State Bank, Bingham, Utah, took \$18,000 in currency and was arrested without resistance soon afterward. His quick capture was due to the fact that the cashier carried a screwdriver in his pocket to be used, he said, in case he was held up and locked in his vault, as was the cashier in another Utah bank robbery recently. Heasted locked the three men and the boy in the vault. Randall used his screwdriver to open the door and was

able to escape in a few minutes. Policeman White overtook Heasted, arrested him without trouble and found all the money in his pockets.

Billiard enthusiasts are beginning to concede that George Sutton, the veteran Chicago player, will carry off the honors in the Champion Billiard Players' League. Since Ora Morningstar retired from the competition while holding the lead, Sutton has been playing a better game than any other member of the organization. He now holds a good lead with the season nearing its end. Calvin Demarest and Harry Cline, however, are close up and they may make matters interesting for the veteran before the season ends. Either has a good chance to win. Albert Cutler and Koji Yamada, along with the three youngsters in the tournament, do not appear to have much chance of carrying off the honors.

George Culbert, of Michigan City, professional diver, employed in the digging of the new wells in the Kankakee River for Laporte's (Ind.) auxiliary water supply, had a thrilling experience while in thirty-five feet of water. One of his hands became caught in the monster suction pipe, holding him fast so that he was unable to reach his life line and give the signal to the men above. For ten minutes he was helpless, while those above continued to pump air to him, but finally, by superhuman efforts, he was able to pull his hand out of his rubber glove and then, before the onrushing water could overcome him, he jerked the life line and was hoisted to the top. Culbert was none the worse for his experience, although it was some time before he was able to resume his work.

An Associated Press correspondent sends the following from the battle line in Poland: "I suppose thousands of Russian schoolboys, most of them not more than 11 or 12 years old, have run away from home, and managed by hook or crook to attach themselves to the army as helpers of one kind or another. Most useful they are, too. At that age they don't know or care about death or danger. A few smart boys solve the difficult problem of the supply of ammunition to the fighting lines during the hottest times. The great schoolboy hero now is Orlof, from Zhitomir. He fought in eleven battles and has been decorated by the Czar with the order of St. George. While on scout duty, he came upon a trench of Russians who were having a hard battle with a superior force of the enemy. He lay in a trench with them and fought all day. By nightfall their ammunition was giving out, and Orlof saved his corps by creeping out in the dark and finding his way through the heaped corpses to the main Russian line, where he obtained reinforcements and a supply of ammunition. He was under gun and rifle fire all the time, but he succeeded in getting through safely."



# THE GOLDEN GROTTO

— OR —

## TWO BOYS' SEARCH FOR NO-NO LAND

By GASTON GARNE

(A SERIAL STORY)

### CHAPTER II (continued)

"I reckon I was, seeing I was the only white man against fifty. They robbed the camp of all that was worth taking and went off quickly, taking me with them. No doubt our people tried to rescue me and the loot, but those black fellows moved so fast that there was no overtaking them. First of all, I was almost dying, but they gave me some native remedy and the fever began to leave me."

"That was very kind of them."

"Very, Jack," answered Morgan, savagely. "They were curing me to eat me."

"Just as if you were pork! Ha, ha!"

"Well, they didn't eat me, anyway. They changed their minds and made a slave of me. Great Scott! What a life I led for six months. Every nigger kicked and cuffed me just as he pleased."

"So you made up your mind to escape?" said Frank.

"I am coming to that. There was an old fellow that was almost worshipped by everybody, a sort of medicine man or priest. Anyway, he was the whole thing, and it was decided that I was to be a slave. I'd never seen this old chap, but I had heard a great deal about him, and at last I reached the place where he lived. I have no recollection of how I got inside. I guess they drugged me and carried me in asleep, so that I would not know the way. When I woke up, I was in a cave with lamps and torches burning that made it as bright as day. I looked around in amazement. The roof, the walls, aye the floor itself, was all of one color, gleaming yellow in the dazzling light. My lads, it was a golden grotto!"

"Not real gold?" cried Jack, opening his eyes wide.

"Real as this," retorted Morgan, holding out a piece of metal, which he took hastily from his pocket. "This is a sample and I have carried it with me ever since. Look at it and you will see that there is no mistake."

"It is gold, right enough," said Frank, "but finish your story."

"That's soon done. I escaped. Some day I will tell you how. I then fell in with a party of slave traders, was carried across the continent to Arabia and finally sailed from there for America. Directly I had the chance, I shipped for Loango, and that is what brings me on board the Puritan. Now, lads, what do you think of my yarn?"

Both boys were silent.

"Speak out," said Morgan. "I shall not feel offended. Pretty hard to swallow, eh? Well, it is true, and the best truth is that I am ready to go up the Ogowe again,

and face savages and deadly fevers and wild beasts to get back to the Grotto. I can't say fairer than that."

"I believe you," said Frank. "I don't doubt but that there are many treasures in Africa known only to the natives. You intend then to leave the ship as soon as we get to land and start on a search for the Golden Grotto?"

"Yes, if you two will come along."

"What makes you tell us your secret?"

"Because I trust you and your chum, Frank Hardy, and I can't go alone. We shan't quarrel about the spoil. There is enough there to make rich men of all of us."

"Do you think you can find this grotto again?"

"I'm dead sure I can, Frank Hardy. Anyway, I can get to within a few miles of it, and the rest ought to be easy. Now, lads, make up your minds, for I am going ashore, and if you don't come along, I will pick up some one who will. The first chance is yours."

"And I take it, Morgan!" cried Frank, excitedly.

"And so, do I," echoed Jack. "We shall have a fine time and no mistake. I wouldn't be left out for anything. Hurrah for the Golden Grotto!"

"The Golden Grotto of No-No Land," said Morgan.

"No-No Land?"

"That's what the niggers call it, lads. I suppose that it's as good as any other."

### CHAPTER III.

#### A STARTLING SPECTACLE.

The great project was talked of continually.

Seeing the boys and Jim Morgan so often together, Ben Burton got it into his head that some plot had been hatched, and more than once he warned Jack and Frank to beware of their companion. Both boys were fond of Ben, but they were so dazzled by the fascinating prospect held before them by Morgan that they took no heed of the kindly advice which was given to them.

Steadily they made their arrangements for the flight from the ship, and for the expedition in search of the gold. They had already learned from Captain Reed that they would not be allowed to go ashore at Loango, and at this they were more furious with him than ever.

"We shall have to take French leave," said Frank. "When we anchor off the port, there's sure to be a boat



at the stern and we must manage to get what things we can on board."

"What a lucky chance it was that we brought our rifles. We must have thought that we were going off on a hunting instead of a deck-scrubbing trip."

"We thought that Captain Reed would treat us decently," said Frank, angrily, "and we have found that we have made a mistake. This time to-morrow I hope to be out of this prison, and if we have good luck we shall be. Morgan's going to manage to get ashore the first thing in the morning. He's got to get hold of a craft fitted for the river and some natives to row it."

"That will cost money," said Frank, "and precious little we have."

"We don't need it. We must give Morgan all the trinkets and little things we can spare, and that will be all he will want, for these black people, as he says, will go crazy over trifles we would despise. He's got to get food aboard the boat and anything else he thinks we will need."

"And when do we start up the river?"

"As soon as we reach the port. We must not lose a minute, for Captain Reed will miss all three of us and he is sure to send a searching party ashore. Our hardest part will be getting away from the ship. Once we have done that, it will be quite easy."

At daybreak the Puritan dropped anchor outside the bar. A large white building could be seen from the deck of the ship. This was a large warehouse where cargoes for export were stored. The town of Loango itself was five miles up the river.

Almost immediately, Captain Reed signified his intention of going ashore and told the chief officer that he should not return until the next day. Jim Morgan was to go ashore with him as one of the crew, and he was to stay at the warehouse until the captain was ready to return.

"Everything is going our way," said Morgan, laughing. "The worst part of the job is yours, my lads, but it can't be helped."

"What, rowing that boat ashore?" cried Jack. "Why that is child's play!"

"Don't you believe it. See that surf? Well, you've got to get through it, and you will have your work cut out for you, let me tell you!"

"We are not afraid," said Frank. "I would go through more than that to get away from this hateful ship. Now, Morgan, just a last word. You know exactly what you have to do."

"I have the list you wrote down for me, and I will see that nothing's left behind."

"And, Morgan," added Frank, "I want you to distinctly understand that we want no rum with us, and I won't have you take any."

"Is that all you've got to say?" said Morgan, with somewhat of a sneer on his face. "Well, I will bear it in mind, and I will be on the lookout for you to-night."

Toward evening the two boys began to make their preparations for flight. One of the ship's boats was riding at the stern, and to make matters easier for the escape, the chief officer, before retiring for the night, had placed Frank and Jack as the watch on deck. Under the

cover of darkness. Jack slipped into the boat down the painter, and, one by one, Frank brought everything that was to be taken along, and handed them down to Jack. Then he lowered himself into the boat and cut the painter.

The two lads bent down to their work, and slowly the heavy boat moved away from the steamer. It was a long and exhausting journey to the shore, and when they were struggling to get through the surf, it seemed as though the boat would be capsized. But, using all their strength and skill, they got the boat safely over the bar and were in still water.

Making their boat fast to the dock, they sprang ashore, and after going a few yards they met Jim Morgan.

"This way, lads," he cried. "Follow me. The craft's only a stone's throw from here, and she's all ready to start."

The boat they were to travel in was lying in the river hidden behind some trees. It was a long, clumsy-looking craft, something in the nature of a canoe, and in it were seated six black men who were to row the boat along. Without a moment's loss of time, the boys and Morgan got on board it and the craft shot out toward the middle of the stream.

"Off for the gold——" cried Jack.

Morgan put his hand over the boy's mouth.

"Hush!" he whispered, angrily. "Do you want to give the whole thing away?"

"But I am speaking in English!"

"What of it? Many of these natives understand our language and speak it after a fashion."

Jack was silent after this. In fact, he and Frank dozed during the night, while the boat traveled on. When morning came, they took their first look at the river. As far as the eye could reach, each bank of the river was covered with dense vegetation, the trees growing about twenty feet high.

"What are all those logs?" asked Jack.

"Crocodiles," said Morgan, dryly.

Jack gave a shout and instantly seized his rifle.

Frank at once caught him by the arm.

"No shooting now," he said.

"Why not, Frank?"

"Because the report of the gun may be heard. Captain Reed is sure to send up the river in search of us. Hark! I hear something now." Frank held up his hand and the men ceased rowing.

"It's the launch coming!" cried Morgan, excitedly. "Quick, quick, you niggers! Over to the bank!"

Urged on by Morgan, the natives reached the bank in a few minutes, and instantly they threaded their way through the vegetation which hung down to the water, and were quite hidden from view. The launch passed, and two hours later they heard it return. Then their journey up the river was resumed. For two days they traveled on, the natives taking little rest, and then it was decided that it would be quite safe to halt. A landing was made and a camp formed. They had brought a fair-sized tent with them that they had hired with the boat, and that night they all enjoyed a sleep which they badly needed.

(To be continued)



## FACTS WORTH READING

### SHIP BABY IN SUITCASE.

A baby boy a few weeks old is being cared for at the Cincinnati Hospital while city detectives are searching two States for its parents.

The baby was found in a suitcase on a doorstep in the rear of the Children's Home, Ninth and Plum streets, the other night. Ella Robinson, of No. 312 Richmond street, living in the rear of the home, was attracted by cries of a baby, and found the child. A hole had been cut in the top of the suitcase to admit air. Two marks on the suitcase are being used by the police as clues.

On the end of the case was an American Express Company tag of the Detroit office, showing the case had been shipped from Detroit. The name of "William Smith" was written with a lead pencil on the tag. The police believe the name may be that of the express agent at Detroit who handled the suitcase in transit or the shippers.

### MILE-A-MINUTE BOAT.

Count Casimir Mankowski is having a motor boat built which he anticipates will attain the dream of the motor boat racing enthusiast—the mile-a-minute boat. The new boat will be 26 feet long and will have two engines of 250-horsepower each. Fred Chase, of the firm of Tams, Lemoyne & Crane, is the designer. The boat will be ready to take part in all the motor boat regattas at Chicago, Thousand Islands and Lake George.

Count Mankowski came into the limelight of publicity three years ago with his boat Ankle Deep, which should have won the last contest for the Harmsworth trophy when the struggle was fought out at Huntington Bay. The Ankle Deep was a mile and a quarter in the lead over Maple Leaf, England's representative, five miles from home when she was disabled by a floating log.

The new boat will be named Ankle Deep Too. The old Ankle Deep was 32 feet long and contained one engine of 300-horsepower. It will be seen by the dimensions of the new boat that Count Mankowski is making a radical change not only in her length but in her horsepower. The new boat will be 6 feet shorter than the old Ankle Deep, but its engine capacity will be greater by 200-horsepower.

### A QUEER ESTRANGEMENT.

When Jaris Wood, aged eighty-two, died in his lonely cabin on Teneriffe Mountain, in East Brookfield, Mass., recently, the story of a strange enmity was told to the village. For forty-two years Jaris and his brother John worked side by side without speaking, and when John lay on his deathbed neither of the brothers would consent to a reconciliation. The estrangement of the two brothers forms a love story that surpasses the fondest plots of the novelist. Both men were suitors for the hand of Miss

Mary Squires, and it is said by some, never contradicted by either brother, that they fought a duel to see which would be the lucky man. Jaris won and went to Spencer, Mass., and married the girl. This was back in 1862. Jaris Wood returned to the lonely farmhouse with his bride, but received no welcome from John. For a time the newlyweds occupied one side of the house and John the other. Mrs. Wood's efforts to effect a reconciliation were fruitless, and this resulted in Jaris building another cabin. When John took sick, Jaris Wood's wife nursed him, but when she saw death was coming and she tried to unite the brothers, neither would consent. During the funeral of John, Jaris sat upon the doorstep, but did not enter the old house until the funeral cortege had started toward the cemetery. During their lives the brothers eked out a bare existence. No modern implements were ever used by them, for both were decided to conduct the rocky farm just as their father did before them. The estrangement was known by all the townsfolk, but neither John nor Jaris would answer any questions of interviewers, and their own stories of the forty-two-year feud were never told.

### INTERIOR LIGHTING OF BUILDINGS.

At a recent meeting of the Illuminating Engineers' Society one of the speakers made a novel but eminently practical suggestion in regard to the interior lighting of buildings, says the Scientific American. The remarks, as quoted by that paper, were as follows:

"Not long since a resident owner called my attention to the fact that the front rooms of his home were in daytime the darkest ones in the house, notwithstanding the fact that these rooms were the most used and the most important. The darkness was caused there—and in fact will be caused in any average residence—by the shielding effect of a large porch, and overhanging eaves. This is a very common condition, and it seems peculiar to me that use has not been made of prism plate glass, or ribbed sheets, in the form of skylights set in the veranda roof, to direct the daylight against the face of the building and into the windows. Glass with a smooth upper side and with prisms on its lower face, parallel to the building, would direct considerably more light into these front rooms than is found at present.

"Going a little further, it seems reasonable to me that use could be made of translucent glass brick or glass blocks in the actual construction of a building. Such blocks could readily be made of glass of pleasing color tints, impervious to weather, and it is conceivable how many beautiful effects could be worked into spaces between pilasters, around domes, friezes, etc. Many architects do not want to have the exterior of a building made characterless by the use of many windows. Glass brick, tinted the color of stone, would offer a solution of such a problem."



# Two Yankee Boys in Cuba

— OR —

## FIGHTING WITH THE PATRIOTS

By ED. KING

(A SERIAL STORY)

### CHAPTER X (continued)

Their horses were at the front door, and they were secured hastily to the saddles, while the four men got their own animals from behind the house and mounted.

Leaving the boys' horses, they galloped away just as the woman returned, bringing her husband and several negro laborers to the house.

They crossed the trail of Marti, which the boys had been following, and sped along rapidly.

Not a word was uttered during the ride.

In an hour they reached a high stone wall surrounding an old, ruined monastery, went through the broken gate, and drew rein before the building.

"Here we are at the rendezvous, safe enough," Durango cried as he dismounted. "It's lucky we chanced to stop at that farmhouse for our luncheon. Had we not done so, we could not have captured these boys."

"Shall we take them inside, captain?" asked one of the men.

"Yes. There we can kill them unseen. I've had Fanita brought here from the house where she has been kept."

"And the wedding?" queried another man.

"I've sent one of the boys to fetch a priest here to perform the ceremony. The good *padre* I want is a greedy old drunken scoundrel. He will do anything I ask for money. I believe his depraved habits will soon cost him his priesthood."

A thrill of alarm passed through Dick, and he gasped:

"Fanita to be forced into a hateful marriage to Durango!"

"Sure, she'll never consent," replied Ned with a frown.

"Ah, they little care for that, confound them!"

"Durango must be a fool," said Ned, in contemptuous tones. "If he's after believing he can force her to marry him. If she refuses to assent to the ceremony, faith, it's no wedding at all, at all. It takes two consents to make that contract."

This view of the case relieved Dick's mind.

His own fate troubled his thoughts less than that of the young Cuban girl on whom his affection was centered.

The Spaniards brought them into the old ruin.

Passing through the large entrance hall, they emerged into the huge square courtyard.

There were several more of the Spaniards there, and at the large, iron-barred window of a room opening on the yard, the boys saw Fanita.

She was a captive in the room.

Her face was as pale as death, her large dark eyes had a look of intense horror in them, and as her tiny hands grasped the iron bars of the window, she cried:

"Oh, *gracias mio!* They have captured my friends, too!"

"Fanita!" exclaimed Dick, huskily. "Have they injured you?"

"Not yet!" she replied. "And my poor brother?"

"He is yet free and has sworn to find you and avenge the death of your father. As for us——"

"Silence there!" roared Durango with a fierce scowl. "No talking! I won't permit it!"

"Oh, you pitiful coward!" cried the girl scathingly.

"Take those boys away!" snarled the captain.

Two of the soldiers grasped them roughly, and they were dragged toward one of the cell-like rooms.

"Fanita—farewell!" groaned Dick in tones of regret.

"May heaven protect you, Dick," she answered.

"Leave go of me, you yellow monkey!" indignantly roared Ned at the trooper who held him.

The Spaniards hurled them into the room with such violence that they fell to the floor bruised and stunned.

It was fully an hour later ere they recovered all their faculties, and sat up on the floor.

They spent the day discussing their situation.

Nothing was brought to them to eat when night fell, and they heard their captors moving about the ruin and talking in disjointed sentences.

"If they're going to kill us," growled Ned, savagely, "they might at least give us the comfort of a square meal."

"There is but little humanity shown in the stern martial law of insurrection," said Dick, "and more so among nations of Spain. We need not expect any mercy from them at all."

"Hark! what's that?"

A shout arose outside.

"The *padre!* The *padre!*"

It made Dick feel sick at heart.

"The priest has arrived!" he muttered, hoarsely.

A few moments later the door of the room was opened.

Durango and several of the men entered, carrying huge candles, which smoked a great deal and flung a sickly glow over the scene.

Two of the men carried a wooden chair, to the back of which a short post was fastened.

There was a hole in the post just above the chair back, in which a strap was thrust doubled in two.



"It's a garroting chair—the instrument with which the Spaniards execute condemned criminals," said Dick.

"Is that to be our fate?" asked Ned, with a shudder.

"No doubt. Well, Durango, what now?"

"Have you said your prayers? Your time on earth is up."

"Proceed with your cruelty. We do not fear death."

"Very well. Put him in the chair, *amigos*."

Two of the men sat Dick on the chair.

Pushing his head back against the post, one of them adjusted the noose of the strap over his head and around his throat, holding him thus rigidly where he was.

Another man took a stick an inch thick, put it through the noose of the strap at the other side of the post, and gave the stick several turns.

The more he twisted the stick, the tighter the strap became, and the more it pressed in against Dick's throat.

"Ready?" asked the self-imposed executioner.

"In a moment," Durango replied, glaring at Dick.

"I have nothing to say," muttered the boy, quietly.

He was resigned to his fate and showed no fear.

"Oh, good heaven!" screamed Ned, who was overwhelmed with horror and despair over the doom of his friend.

"Hold your tongue, or we'll gag you!" hissed Durango.

"I'll not," shouted Ned, furiously. "Give me one moment's freedom, you scoundrels, and let me fight you single-handed!"

"Don't take on, old chap," said Dick. "Heaven bless you. It will all be over in a moment. Good-by, Ned."

A howl of anguish from the red-headed boy interrupted him, for poor Ned was wild with grief about his friend.

"Turn that stick!" exclaimed Durango, in gruff tones to the executioner. "I don't want to prolong this scene."

It seemed as if the man was eager to obey, he acted so promptly, and the strap tightened on Dick's throat.

The poor fellow cast a reproachful glance at Durango, and the crowd formed a group around the chair.

Filled with morbid curiosity to see how a person looked while undergoing the operation of garroting, the Spaniards watched Dick keenly.

As the strap was drawn tighter, the boy began to breathe heavily, and gasp stertorously for air.

He grew dark in the face.

His eyes bulged from their sockets.

His lips swelled, and the almost bursting veins stood out on his forehead and temples like whip cords.

Tighter and tighter his throat was squeezed until at length he could not breathe.

Ned shut his eyes and groaned aloud.

He could not endure the terrible spectacle of seeing his friend being gradually choked to death.

"This is my revenge for the injury you have caused me," he heard Durango hiss, as the villain bent over toward his hapless victim and shook his finger in poor Dick's face.

Ned knew it was his turn next.

But death did not have one-half the horror to him as the scene then being enacted, which Durango had cruelly arranged for him to witness.

A terrible silence now ensued.

Lit up by the flickering torches the scene assumed a frightful aspect, for the life of the brave boy in the chair was slowly but surely ebbing away.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE FATAL CLOCK CHIMES.

"Help! Help!"

Bang! Bang! Bang!

These cries and pistol shots came from the courtyard.

So sudden and startling was the interruption that the man who was executing Dick let go the stick, and it spun around, the strap unwound, and the pressure was relieved from the boy's throat.

Durango rushed out in the yard, followed by his men.

There he saw the man who had been on guard struggling with a Cuban boy, whom he recognized as Mario.

In a moment more they parted.

"I shall save you yet, Fanita, sister mine!" cried the boy.

"Oh, Mario, go away. You cannot cope with so many," the girl replied from her prison window.

The moon was flooding the place with its silvery light.

In tropics the moon is like a powerful electric light.

"*Compadre!*" cried the captain, vehemently. "It is her brother!"

"Shall we attack him?" eagerly asked one of the others.

"Tear him to pieces!" savagely answered Durango.

All hands made a rush for the boy.

He did not flinch, however, but picked up a small parcel he had laid down when attacked by the sentry.

From it he withdrew four dynamite bombs with which he had provided himself from one of the patriots' caches.

Mario hurled one at the crowd.

It struck in their midst, exploded with a flash of fire and a thunderous report, and scattered its burst shell.

A yell pealed from every man.

Several were badly wounded by the flying fragments of metal, and one was killed outright.

Just then the sentry rushed at the desperate boy.

He intended to get the bombs.

Instead, he got a ball from Mario's pistol, which dropped him in his tracks, and the boy hurled another bomb.

As the deafening report roared out, the Spaniards who had escaped serious injury made a wild rush for a rear exit, stumbling over each other in their furious efforts to get out of the place uninjured.

A faint, grim smile crossed the boy's face upon observing their terror, and he hurled a third bomb.

It burst so close to the flying Spaniards that several received further wounds of a serious, if not fatal, kind.

"Not a shot fired at me yet!" the Cuban boy muttered.

Then he dashed over to the door of his sister's prison, shot back the bolts, and in a moment more they were embracing.

Fanita did not lose a precious moment.

(To be continued)



## GOOD READING

John Calimer, of Philadelphia avenue, Waynesboro, Pa., was arrested charged with cruelty to animals and had to pay \$8.92. Some weeks ago the valuable Russian hound belonging to O. M. Peters, superintendent of the Emerson-Brantingham Implement Company, strayed away from home and later the animal was found near the Welty Bridge in a weak condition as the result of having been shot. Calimer admitted he shot the dog, thinking at the time that it was a rare specie of wild animal, and, when the dog came toward him, he thought he was about to be attacked by a queer animal and shot it in self-defense. The dog was shot and has now about recovered. It is valued at \$150.

A motor omnibus run by steam generated from coke is the latest automobile novelty in London. So successful is it the Royal Automobile Club has awarded to the National Steam Car Company the Dewar Challenge Trophy for the most meritorious achievement of the year in automobile engineering. Instead of having a furnace fed with paraffin, the new omnibus automatically stokes itself with coke. The bunkers are inside the bonnet and surround the boiler. Thus not only is the coke kept dry and warm, but also it acts as lagging to the boiler and prevents loss of heat. It is a small vertical boiler, with the furnace underneath; and mechanical feeders, which may be likened to the fingers of a hand, pass the coke downward to the fire. An ingenious device prevents clinkering. The bunkers, which can be easily replenished, hold sufficient coke for a run of fifty to sixty miles. On a trial trip to Brighton and back a lorry weighing with its load six and a half tons used 446 pounds of coke in 109½ miles and ran 83¾ miles before it was necessary to stop for water. The average speed was twelve miles an hour, and the cost for fuel is less than one-third that of an omnibus using paraffin for steam generating.

The Pelican Portage gas gusher, 170 miles north of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, has given off daily for sixteen years an average of 4,000,000 feet of natural gas. The well was struck in 1898 and has never shown signs of diminishing. Attempts made to cap it have proved futile, the enormous pressure, some 600 pounds to the square inch, blowing off all valves. At one time a company was formed to pipe the gas to Edmonton, but was refused a franchise. Recently public-spirited men subscribed \$10,000 to drill for gas near the city's limits. They struck a flow about equal to the daily output of the Pelican. This will be piped to Edmonton and, now that the venture has proved successful, the men who furthered it will be reimbursed by the city. So it appears the great gusher at the Pelican is doomed to waste its unestimated millions. The only beneficiaries from it are the men of two oil-drilling outfits in the vicinity who have piped a line from the

gusher to their workings. Indians occasionally camp in the neighborhood and as the gas seeps through the ground they merely heap up a pile of stones over some crevice, touch a match and cook their simple food. It is always warm near the blaze even in below zero weather, so that men sleep about it in the balmiest of air while a few hundred feet beyond is bitter cold.

The last of three Spanish feast plays, "Los Pastores," hunted for by Spanish students throughout Mexico, California and Arizona, has been found in Santa Barbara, Cal., by Prof. A. M. Espinosa, head of the Spanish department of the Stanford University, and Frank Price, Spanish student. The manuscript was found among the papers handed down to the family of Jose Manuel Pico of this city. It had been brought to California 200 years ago by Patricio Sepulveda. The three plays, taken together, form a cycle in the life of Christ, and were written by the first padres as a means of teaching the natives. Copies of two of the cycle were found in 1887. Since then a search for the third has been carried on by university researchers and other Spanish students, Stanford being especially active, as the university is compiling the ancient Spanish literature of the Californians. Prof. Espinosa has been to Santa Barbara many times on the quest. Ancient plays telling the story of the birth of Christ, the three kings and a number of other parts of the cycle have been found here and elsewhere, but that part called "Los Pastores," telling of the three Shepherds, had eluded search until now. The manuscript has been sent to Stanford, where it will be closely studied and put into English.

At a recent meeting of the Academy of Sciences in Paris M. le Roy described a quick process of waterproofing clothes of any sort. He takes five to ten parts of lanolin, liquefied in chloroform and diluted with ninety to ninety-five parts of gasoline. Into this the clothes to be treated are dipped, without removing linings or buttons. After being shaken about in it for a few minutes they are wrung out and dried in the open air. At the Safety Exposition in New York Dr. Charles Frederick Pabst of Brooklyn told how to make clothes fireproof. They should, he said, be dipped in a solution of ammonium phosphate, one pound to a gallon of cold water. Ammonium phosphate costs only 25 cents a pound, he said. Dr. Pabst took an eight-inch strip of ordinary cotton gauze, equivalent to the material in the Indian and cowboy suits so popular among children, and ignited it. It was wholly consumed within four seconds. Then he took a similar strip, dipped it in the ammonium phosphate solution, dried it with an electric fan, and held it in a flame for thirty seconds, but it did not burn. "Families should get this solution, keep it in their houses, and dip the whole family washing in it," said Dr. Pabst. "It would cost about 15 cents a week for an entire family."



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## BRIEF BUT POINTED ITEMS

The Howe Show, in winter quarters at Peru, Ind., has lost one of the largest pythons in captivity. The snake, which died recently, was twenty-four feet in length. Local taxidermists have prepared the skin for the Boston Museum of Natural History.

The Kennedy-Mohler contest at Walker, Minn., for the office of sheriff attracted attention over this entire section. About 100 witnesses were examined, among them a number of Indians. An amusing incident occurred when one of the Indians who had been on the stand for some time and had tired of the searching examination, replied: "If you do not quit asking foolish questions I will go out and go home."

A trick elephant was standing in an alley in the rear of a theater, Porterville, Cal., when John Wallace, a box-maker, came along peeling an orange. The orange was sour, so he passed it on to the elephant. With a snort the elephant promptly wound its trunk about Wallace and hurled him headlong into a pile of packing cases, thirty feet away. Wallace was unconscious when he was dug from the wreckage and two surgeons worked over him for nearly three hours repairing cuts and contusions.

That the pressure in an automobile tire, fully pumped up, remains practically the same whether the car is resting on the tires or is jacked up is the discovery made by one of the large rubber companies in an endeavor to solve some questions of "caring for tires while the car is laid up." It was found by means of special gauges that in an ordinary sized tire, which shows a pressure of 80 pounds while the car is jacked up, it will show 80.4 pounds with the weight of the car resting on the tires. The cubic contents are compressed by "flattening" from 900 cubic inches to 896 cubic inches.

According to Consul John M. Savage, who is stationed at Sheffield, England, a firm in that city has introduced a stainless steel, which is claimed to be non-rusting, unstainable and un tarnishable. This steel is said to be especially adaptable for table cutlery, as the original polish

is maintained after use, even when brought in contact with the most acid foods, and it requires only ordinary washing to cleanse. "It is claimed," writes Mr. Savage in the Commerce Reports, "that this steel retains a keen edge much like that of the best double-shear steel, and, as the properties claimed are inherent in the steel and not due to any treatment, knives can readily be sharpened on a 'steel' or by using the ordinary cleaning machine or knifeboard. It is expected it will prove a great boon, especially to large users of cutlery, such as hotels, steamships and restaurants. The price of this steel is about 26 cents a pound for ordinary sizes, which is about double the price of the usual steel for the same purpose. It also costs more to work up, so that the initial cost of articles made from this new discovery, it is estimated, will be about double the present cost; but it is considered that the saving of labor to the customer will more than cover the total cost of the cutlery in the first twelve months."

## JOKES AND JESTS

"I want to get a divorce," she told the lawyer. "What has your husband been doing?" he asked. "Nothing," she replied.

"Some men get a heap o' education," said Uncle Eben, "de same as some people get a fine collection o' bait wifout catchin' any fish."

"Some o' de men," said Uncle Eben, "dat shouts de loudes' 'bout de wickedness of de trusts wouldn' hesitate a minute to do a friend in a mule trade."

Smith—I woke up last night with a horrible suspicion that my new gold watch was gone. So strong was the impression that I got up to look. Brown—Well, was it gone? Smith—No; but it was going.

Guide (to tourist)—Vell, sare, how you like ridin' de camel? Tourist—Well, we don't blend very well, as it were. You see, he can do with a drink every three weeks, and I want one every three miles.

Neighbors—I heard your dog howling last night. It howls three nights in succession it's a sure sign of death. Next Door—Indeed! And who do you think will die? Neighbors—The dog.

Freda—He claims to be related to you, and says he can prove it. Floyd—Related to me? Why, the man's a fool. Freda—Of course; but that may be a mere coincidence.

Two college students were arraigned before the magistrate charged with hurdling the low spots in the road in their motor-car. "Have you a lawyer?" asked the magistrate. "We're not going to have any lawyer," answered the elder of the students. "We've decided to tell the truth."



## A LADY'S HAT.

By Alexander Armstrong

One tempest-tossed night, weather-bound at a small hotel on the stage-route from Santa Fe, we met a fellow-traveler in whom we became greatly interested.

The howling gale and elemental uproar intensified the cozy cheer of our snug little parlor.

The genial warmth from the heaped-up ruddy coals in the grate and spicy exhalations steaming from an earthen mug brewing in front, out of which, from time to time, we replenished our glasses, stimulated conversation, and we were soon launched upon a stream of startling adventure.

Among others, my companion—a finely-built, athletic fellow—narrated an experience of the previous season, which, he said, "Made every hair stand on tip-toe."

"How?" we asked. "You were in great peril?"

"One of those imminent risks that meet you at every turn.

"Four of us came in the stage from Santa Fe, the last of June, I think. A young lady—governess in an officer's family—her escort a wealthy young merchant, reputable, with a guarantee of honor inscribed on every line of his earnest face, and myself, were acquaintances; the other was the horseshoer of the company, bound for the stable at Denver.

"As a government expert I was well known to the bankers of Santa Fe. They never hesitated to intrust me with large amounts of gold, and this time was no exception. So I was loaded, partly by means of an inner belt around my waist, partly by a false bottom, improvised in my valise by gumming strong wrapping-paper over the precious parcels and inner lining of the bag.

"The day would have been intolerable but for the cool currents that swept down the declivities and through the mountain ravines. Frequently during the day, up the steep ascents, we would get out and walk. It rested us and relieved the tedium of the drive. The lady was most charming, rattling her words like fine shot against our sallies of wit and wisdom, and turning into sport and jest our serious fears. She became confidential, and told us she expected to return a madame, with a military escort, if she returned at all. Her intended was a lieutenant, stationed now in the Indian territory; but when he received his furlough—well, very soon, perhaps—then we might expect to hear of wedding-bells."

"I would like to be a little richer," she added, with a sigh, "but we must be content."

"What is the amount of your dowry?" said the practical merchant.

"She laughed merrily. 'Are you a bandit in disguise?' Then added: 'The fruits of my industry amount to the heavy weight of one thousand dollars in gold.'

"You haven't it with you?" he inquired, so quickly and earnestly that I was surprised.

"Oh no, you are accounted shrewd. Just try and find out. I will answer all relevant questioning."

"He blushed and stammered an apology, and she sat

for a moment on a rock that projected from the side of the road over the mountain edge. She had gathered stray flowers on her walk, diving under bushes and behind rocks, and was fastening them on her hat and mantle. A scarlet creeper ran around the base of the rock down the side of the mountain.

"'Oh, that is beautiful; I must have it,' she said, rising to her feet and dropping hat and flowers in the excitement. Just then a sudden eddy of wind came twisting around the corner of a fissure, and whirled hat and flowers around and around, lodging them beyond her power of recovery, on a narrow ledge of perpendicular rock, jutting out and inaccessible from the road.

"'How now? What will you do?' I said, half in sport at the possibility of a bare-headed companion for the rest of the trip.

"To my surprise she looked the image of despair and grief; the color had faded out of her rosy cheeks, even her lips were ashy and pale. Her hands were clasped in the most agonizing expression, as she mutely gazed at the slender shape below, mocking her with its airy grace of blooms.

"'Oh, my friends! can't you recover that hat for me? Do, in pity, and I will thank you to my dying day!'

"No mother, appealing for a lost child, could have been more piteous, while tears stood in her eyes. I was half angry that any woman could be so metamorphosed by the loss of a hat. The merchant whistled, looked bewildered, but evidently didn't choose to risk his life. The driver and horseshoer came to her rescue; they fastened a hook on to the end of a coil of rope, saying, 'Don't fear, miss, nor look so anxious; we'll rig something an' get yer hat.'

"The driver, stretched at full length, with only his head and an arm over the precipice, and anchored firmly by the rest of the party, threw his rope, harpoon fashion, with an unerring aim. It caught in the rim, the hat was drawn up carefully and restored to the young girl, who, with exhilarating color and sparkling eyes, thanked the men most profusely. They cut short her rhapsodies by jumping on the driver's box and telling us to 'pile in.'

"Once inside, she said, 'As you are all my friends, I must let you into the secret of my hat. All the money I possess is hidden in the lining—quilted in—and no man, not even a highwayman, would ever suspect the treasure hidden in such a cell, now would they?'

"We, of course, praised her ingenuity.

"'A good thousand, is it?' said the merchant.

"'The very sum,' she replied.

\* \* \* \* \*

"It was two o'clock in the morning. We were well out of the most formidable passes, driving briskly towards the Canadian fork. The full moon lighted our way, making the bushes and trees adjacent cast sharp and decided shadows across the road. I had exchanged places with the horseshoer. Inside they were dozing, but I was wakeful and alert. We beguiled the weary hours by story-telling. Suddenly I saw something moving in the shadow of the road on beyond us.

"What is that?" I said.

"The driver looked, his eyes rounding like the moon



"'Nothing but a burro,' referring to the pack-mules that frequently strayed down the mountainside. It disappeared quickly in the shade; and thence instantly, as if by magic, jumped out into the road two men. They were hidden in huge slouch hats and army cloaks. The stoutest caught the bridle of the leaders; the other covering us with his rifle shouted: 'Don't stir, or you are dead men!'

"Advancing closer, and keeping us within the range of his muzzle, he cried out, 'Pitch out the treasure-box—quick! We are in a hurry!'

"The driver began to stammer a reply, shaking as if he had an ague, but I hushed him with a whispered 'Stop, stop; let me talk to these men. There is no treasure aboard to-night.'

"As I intended he should, he took me for an express messenger, and as neither driver and messenger are supposed to possess any valuables, they are seldom molested.

"'Come, heave out that specie-box,' shouted the man holding the rifle.

"I insisted there was none.

"'Here, look at the way-bill; if there is any such thing aboard it will be among the items.'

"And I made a move to get down, holding it in my hands.

"'Stay where you are, or I will shoot you!'

"I threw him the way-bill. He dropped his rifle and picked it up, perusing the items in the moonlight.

"Profiting by this action, I endeavored to slip my port-manteau under the seat.

"The driver, misunderstanding the movement, whispered:

"'Have you got one?'

"The man at the reins noticed the conferring, and halloed to us. The other instantly raised his gun.

"'None of that! Hands up!'

"We threw up our hands, and he again turned to the way-bill. I did manage, though, to secrete my money, slipping it into my boot.

"'You see there's no mention made of the treasure, and if it was sent it would be noted on the bill. However, you can get up and look in the box, and satisfy yourself.'

"He hesitated but a moment, and then jumped up and looked in the box; in doing so he kicked my valise.

"'Open this,' said he.

"I did so, taking out carefully its contents and letting him look inside; the wrapping-paper deceived him.

"'No,' he cried, 'there's no treasure on this stage; but we've sworn to have a hundred dollars to-night, and if we can't find it in the treasure-box, we may find it in the baggage. Who's inside?'

"'Two men and a lady—none of them rich; one is the horseshoer, going to Denver to shoe the company's horses.'

"'We'll look out for 'em. Whatever happens, don't stir on your peril. We may find the money on them, or in the baggage.'

"It was evident they were sleeping. The man rattled the door and roused them. Presenting his gun, he ordered them out to be searched. They obeyed, half asleep.

"'Hands up!' he said. 'Now for your pockets!'

"The horseshoer had but two dollars in silver, the mer-

chant's portemonnaie showed but five, and the young lady's nothing but her papers and a little change. The girl, I was sure, looked as if she would swoon.

"'You're a mean lot, to have so little with you,' said he, 'and I've a mind to finish you. A hundred dollars we must have, so we'll go for your baggage.'

"'You'll find nothing of account in our baggage, but if you will ask this young lady for her hat, and carefully rip out the lining, you will find something worth your pains.'

"The girl turned towards him with blazing eyes, and uttered but the one word—"Traitor!"

"There was no escape; the hat was secured.

"After the lining had been very carefully ripped out it was returned, with thanks.

"'In luck, in luck!' said the highwayman. 'Jump in all. I'm sorry for your loss, miss, but we are bound to take whatever is sent us. We have no treasure, but this will do. Drive on!'

"'I want the way-bill!' I said, excitedly, for the scene we had just witnessed had increased my indignation to a fever-heat.

"He handed it to me, but it fluttered under the horses' feet, and again I demanded it. Mechanically he picked it up, mounted the wheel, and handed it to me. Then, touching his hat to the lady, said:

"'But for this lining you might have been lying in yonder ditch. No treasure on board! Come this way next time without it, and we'll finish your accounts. Drive on!'

"We gladly followed this advice, but could not find language vigorous enough to express our contempt for the meanness of the merchant. The driver swore at him in Spanish, and the young lady answered all attempts at consolation with hysterical sobs. The merchant alone preserved his cool equanimity of temper.

"Arriving at Denver, he begged very earnestly of the young lady, with me as her friend, to grant him a few moments for explanation, in a private room. He was so in earnest that the young girl yielded a reluctant consent.

"He closed the door and bolted it, which seemed strangely.

"'Don't fear,' he said, as I fumbled for my revolver. Sitting in a chair, he pulled off his boot, and, from the toe, drew out a roll of notes. Said he:

"'A few days before leaving, I was lucky enough to find an opportunity to exchange my doubloons for notes. My poor child, let me make restitution. Here are two thousand in notes for the one thousand secured by the robbers'—handing her that amount. 'Your lining has been my salvation; if they had searched me further they would have secured twenty instead of one thousand. Concealed in my baggage are diamonds and precious stones, which, if they had secured, would have beggared me.' Taking a solitaire from his vest-lining, he presented that as her acceptance. 'I should have explained in the stage, but walls have ears,' and why should I trust my secrets with my secrets?'

"I need not tell you that the lady's tears were translated into rare smiles, and she was sent to her home rejoicing."



## FROM ALL POINTS

Announcement was made by the Pittsburgh Baseball Club the other day that Catcher Frank Kafore, draughted in the fall of 1913 and on the club's roster last year, had been released to the Omaha Club of the Western League. This leaves the Pittsburgh Club with five catchers, fourteen pitchers, eight infielders and ten outfielders. Hans Wagner has not signed a contract for 1915.

A barking dog led to the discovery of a \$4,000 robbery at the Bank of Neelyville, Mo. The bank failed to open at the regular hour. Depositors gathered about the door heard the cashier's pet dog barking within. They investigated and found the cashier locked in the vault. He called out the lock combination and was released. He said he had been locked in by a robber who confronted him at the bank door.

Three hundred and fifty teachers attending the Jefferson County Teachers' Institute instituted a vigorous campaign against the liquor traffic in a local theater, Reynoldsville, Pa. After becoming enthusiastic over local option at their afternoon meeting the teachers attended a performance at a theater. Before they would allow the show to go on, however, several climbed to the stage and pinned several yards of cloth over the liquor advertisements on the stage curtain. When the officials of the theater removed the cloth the teachers were indignant and immediately "retacked" the covers over the ads. The performance finally proceeded, but the liquor ads remained hidden.

The climate of Egypt has been changing in a remarkable manner in the last few years. Rain fell in torrents in Alexandria during the celebration of the accession of the new Sultan. Such a happening half a century ago would have been regarded as a phenomenon, but rain now falls in places where it had never been known to fall before in many centuries, and more rain is falling where only very little, or merely dew, once aided the farmers. The English are believed to be responsible for the rain, with their new channels for spreading over the land the waters of the Nile. Just as the plantation of trees in a desert will bring rain, so is Egypt now a moister place because of the extension of cultivated lands. But it is not likely that Western civilization will destroy the wonderful dryness of the Egyptian air, with its beneficent effect on invalids.

G. H. Wilson lies at the Cottage Hospital, Santa Barbara, Cal., in a critical condition from as thrilling and unusual an encounter as has ever taken place here. He had a life-and-death struggle with a huge jellyfish. Four hundred feet from shore, off Serena, Wilson, who is senior partner of the firm of Wilson & Schwab, automobile men of this city, was suddenly attacked. He saw before him

what he said looked like a great sheet of butter and eggs. Suddenly strips of yellow and white began to separate from the mass and extend toward him. He turned to swim out of reach when the creature threw its tentacles about him and the mad fight was on. In the struggle Wilson broke the mass into fragments, but reached the shore exhausted, and his face and shoulders stinging as though from scalds. At the hospital it was said that the patient is getting along favorably. His pain at times was so intense that morphine had to be administered. His shoulders and face resemble one mass of poison oak burns.

California's lawn tennis players are greatly profiting by the excitement of the controversy as to whether or not Newport or New York is to be the scene of the national championship tournament next season. At the close of last season Dr. E. B. Dewhurst, former national indoor champion; Raymond D. Little and others started a campaign for a new amateur rule. The men behind the movement stated that Maurice E. McLoughlin had been playing tennis for six months with all of his expenses paid out of the treasury of the national association; that other players from California were in receipt of abundant expense money and that the entire principal of the payment of expenses was wrong. The draft of a rigid amateur rule, positively prohibiting payment of any expenses or the offer of any entertainment except for Davis Cup teams, had been made when the storm broke between Newport and the West Side Club. According to the by-laws of the national association the amateur rule must now await another year for enactment, while the future of the all-comers' championship is bitterly fought out.

P. E. Thomas, of Grand Rapids, Mich., claims the championship of Michigan for corn husking. He established a new record this year on the farm of R. G. Brumm, near Nashville, in Barry County, when he husked 146 bushels in ten hours, an average of 14.3-5 bushels per hour, or one bushel to each 42-7 minutes. His best time during the day was 15 bushels in forty minutes. Mr. Thomas's grandfather was an expert husker and at one time did even better than the grandson's best record, husking 168 bushels in ten hours. His father husked 147 bushels in ten hours. Mr. Thomas has made a business of husking corn for seventeen years. He says the corn in Mr. Brumm's field is the best in which he ever worked. The corn is of the Folsom yellow dent variety, which was introduced into this locality by W. H. Burd. Mr. Brumm's field contains 81-6 acres and the total yield was 1,143 bushels per acre. There is no question about the correctness of Mr. Thomas's record, as accurate time was kept on his work and on the measure of his corn by Mr. Brumm. Mr. Thomas says he expects to beat his own record and that of his grandfather next year. He may go on the vaudeville stage with a corn husking act next fall.



## ARTICLES OF ALL KINDS

### MAKING BIG GUNS.

A fascinating sight is to watch the first stages in the manufacture of the big guns which are proving so devastating in the war, says the Chicago Journal. A solid ingot of steel, some 50 feet in length and weighing about 100 tons, is employed in the making of a 13-inch gun. After being forged and then allowed to cool, so that it may be toughened for the heavy work, this gigantic bar of steel is pressed into cylindrical shape by a power hydraulic press, which exerts a pressure of anything between 5,000 and 10,000 tons to the square inch. Later what is known as the trepanning operation is carried out, namely, drilling the bore from end to end. Next the bore is rifled.

The most impressive sight, however, is the hardening process, when the rough weapon is heated to dazzling white heat and plunged into a well full of oil. If the operation takes place in the night time the sight of this big, glowing bar of metal being lowered apparently into the bowels of the earth, sending forth leaping tongues of flames from the burning oil, is impressive in the extreme. The gun is left to cool in the oil bath, out of which it comes hardened, toughened and tempered.

Now follows the wire-winding operation to make the weapon stronger and impart to it some measure of elasticity. This wire-winding is much the same in principle as the whipping on the handle of a racket bat. In this case, however, the whipping takes the form of a strong steel ribbon, which is wound around the body of the gun. Every 13-inch gun has about 120 miles of this steel ribbon wound about it. Some idea of the labor involved in the manufacture of one of these guns may be gathered from the fact that from start to finish the time occupied is twelve months.

### FIGHTING CATERPILLARS WITH STEAM.

Hordes of caterpillars proved a serious menace to railroad operation this summer on the McCloud River Railroad, in northern California. Locomotives could not make traction because of the millions of wriggling crawlers that clogged the rails, forming a slimy mass as the engine passed over them. Sand was of no avail; cresol sprinkled along the rails checked them for only a brief time; and the expedient of placing men on the cowcatcher to sweep off the creatures with a broom was of no value at all. More caterpillars were crushed by the brooms than were brushed clear of the tracks, while those that escaped alive promptly crawled back upon the rails before the train had passed.

Apparently the railroad was under the necessity of digging trenches for many miles along both sides of the right of way, a very heavy outlay, but the only effective method so far discovered of holding the creeping hordes in check. This method had been used with success in the lumber camps of that section, which had also been overwhelmed with the pest.

However, this great expense was done away with by an invention of Master Mechanic John Kennedy, who devised a system of forcing live steam from the locomotive boiler upon the rails ahead of the cowcatcher. The heat killed the insects, while the force of the jet threw their bodies off the track without crushing them. In this manner, the problem was solved with slight expense, as Mr. Kennedy's invention was of extreme simplicity. It consists of a couple of small tubes extending from the boiler to the front of the locomotive and terminating a few inches above each rail. The engineer controls the steam outlet with a simple device. After using this invention for a short period, the bodies of countless thousands of caterpillars were banked alongside the track for miles.

### BIG ENTRY SURE FOR AMATEUR CUE HONORS.

So many amateur billiard players have signified their intention to compete in the national Class A 18.2 balk line championship tournament as to make it certain that the competition will be the greatest ever held in this country. It is practically assured that ten or a dozen will qualify for the matches which are scheduled to begin at the Union League Club, Philadelphia, Monday, March 1.

Among the men who have announced their intention of striving for the title now held by Edward W. Gardner are: Joseph Mayer, the winner of the championship at Philadelphia in 1913; J. Ferdinand Poggenburg, international champion; E. L. Milburn, of Memphis, Tenn.; Dr. Walter E. Uffenheimer, of Philadelphia, and W. E. Cope Morton. While they have not replied to the officials of the National Association of Amateur Billiard Players as to their intentions, it is understood that Gardner and Morris D. Brown, the veterans, will participate in the tournament.

The chief interest centers in Nathan T. Hall, the young Bostonian, who defeated Joseph Mayer recently in a lengthy match, and the youthful wizard from Chicago, August F. Bloese, who are to send in entries. Hall's performance against Mayer stamped him as a remarkable player, as his average stood above 14. Bloese is said to be another Calvin Demarest, with plenty of runs up to the hundred mark and averages all the way up to 40. Robert Lord and Wilson Henderson, two other amateurs of Chicago, are likely entrants. Dr. Walter G. Douglas, secretary of the National Association, has tried out Henderson and found him capable of holding to an average of around 15.

Charles Heddon, of Dowagiac, Mich., the amateur who put up the high record run of 135 last year at the Class A tournament in this city, has stated that he will be unable to compete. Heddon, however, has made a find in Corwin Huston, of Detroit. Huston began his billiards when he was a student at the University of Michigan, where he worked his way through college by running a small billiard room with his two brothers who were also students.



### LINK THE LINK PUZZLE.



The sensation of the day. Pronounced by all, the most baffling and scientific novelty out. Thousands have worked at it for hours without mastering it, still it can be done in two seconds by giving the links the proper twist, but unless you know how, the harder you twist them the tighter they grow. Price, 6c.; 3 for 15c.; one dozen, 50c., by mail, postpaid.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

### THE SURPRISE FOUNTAIN PEN



A novelty of the greatest merit! It looks just like a genuine fountain pen. But it isn't. That's where the joke comes in. If

you take off the cover, a nice, ripe, juicy lemon appears. Then you give the friend you lend it to the merry "ha-ha." You might call it an everlasting joke because you can use it over and over again. Price, by mail, postpaid, 10c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### JAPANESE TRICK KNIFE.



You can show the knife and instantly draw it across your finger, apparently cutting deep into the flesh. The red blood appears on the blade of the knife, giving a startling effect to the spectators. The knife is removed and the finger is found in good condition. Quite an effective illusion. Price 10c. each by mail.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### STAR AND CRESCENT PUZZLE.



The puzzle is to separate the one star from the linked star and crescent without using force. Price by mail, postpaid 10c.; 3 for 25c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### SLIDE THE PENCIL.



The pencil that keeps them guessing. Made of wood and lead just like an ordinary pencil, but when your victim starts to write with it—presto! the lead disappears. It is so constructed that the slightest pressure on the paper makes the lead slide into the wood. Very funny and a practical joke. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### NORWEGIAN MOUSE.



A very large gray mouse, measuring 8 inches from tip of nose to end of tail. The body of mouse is hollow. Place your first finger in his body, and then by moving your finger up and down, the mouse appears to be running up your sleeve. Enter a room where there are ladies, with the mouse running up your sleeve, and you will see a rapid scattering of the fair sex. Many practical jokes can be perpetrated with this small rodent.

Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c. mailed, postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

### MAMAS.



This interesting toy is one of the latest novelties out. It is in great demand. To operate it, the stem is placed in your mouth. You can blow into it, and at the same time pull or jerk lightly on the string. The mouth opens, and it then cries "Ma-ma," just exactly in the tones of a real, live baby. The sound is so human that it would deceive anybody. Price 12c. each by mail.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### THE FRIGHTFUL RATTLESNAKE!



To all appearance it is a harmless piece of coiled paper with a mouth-piece attachment, but upon placing it to one's mouth, and blowing into the tube, an imitation snake over two feet in length springs out of the roll like a flash of lightning, producing a whistling, fluttering sound that would frighten a wild Indian. We guarantee our rattlesnake not to bite, but would not advise you to play the joke on timid women or delicate children. Each snake packed in a box. Price, 10c.; 3 for 25c., mailed postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### THE BURNING CIGARETTE.



The greatest trick joke out. A perfect imitation of a smoldering cigarette with bright red fire. It fools the wisest. Send 10c. and we will mail it. WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### TRICK PUZZLE PURSE.



The first attempt usually made to open it, is to press down the little knob in the center of the purse, when a small needle runs out and stabs them in the finger, but does not open it. You can open it before their eyes and still they will be unable to open it. Price, 25c. each by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### MARBLE VASE.



A clever and puzzling effect, easy to do; the apparatus can be minutely examined. Effect: A marble can be made to pass from the hand into the closed vase, which a moment before was shown empty. This is a beautiful enameled turned wood vase. Price, 20c.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

### POCKET WHISK-BROOM.



This is no toy, but a real whisk-broom, 6 1/2 inches high. It is made of imported Japanese bristles, neatly put together, and can easily be carried in the vest pocket, ready for use at any moment, for hats or clothing, etc. Price 10 cents each, by mail, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., N. Y.

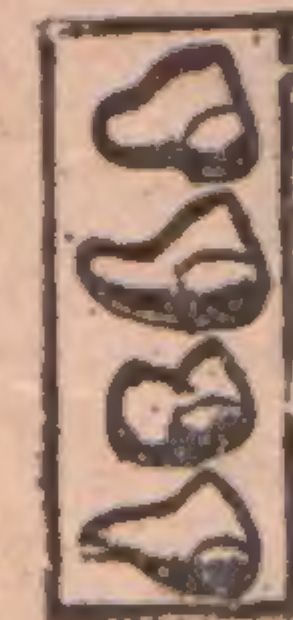
### FOUR WEEKS (A LOUD BOOK).



Has the absolute and exact shape of a book in cloth. Upon the opening of the book, after having it set up according to directions furnished, a loud report similar to that of a pistol-shot will be heard, much to the amazement and surprise of the victim. Cape not mallable; can be bought at any toy store. Price, 65c. by mail, postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

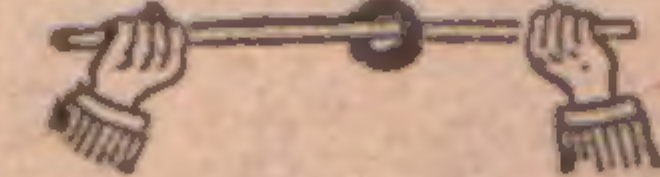
### FALSE NOSES.



Change your face! Have a barrel of fun! They are life-like reproductions of funny noses, made of shaped cloth, waxed, and colored. When placed over your nose, they remain on securely, and only a close inspection reveals their false character. All shapes, such as pugs, hooks, short-horn lemons, and rum blossoms. Better than a false face. Can be carried in the vest pocket. Price, by mail, 10c. each.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

### THE MYSTIC RING.



A Brand-New Trick, Just Out.—Puzzling, Mystifying and Perplexing. A metal ring is handed around for examination, and is found to be solid, unbroken japanned iron. A cane, a pencil or a string is held tightly at each end by a spectator. The performer lightly taps the cane with the ring, and the ring suddenly is seen to be encircling the cane. How did the ring pass the spectator's two hands and get on the cane? The most mystifying trick ever invented. Others charge 75 cents for this trick; but our price, including instruction, is 12c., postpaid. C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

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The importance of carrying a good reliable pencil need not be dwelt upon here. It is an absolute necessity with us all. The holder of this pencil is beautifully nicked with grooved box-wood handle, giving a firm grip in writing; the pencil automatically supplies the lead as needed while a box of these long leads are given with each pencil. The writing of this pencil is indelible the same as ink, and thus can be used in writing letters, addressing envelopes, etc. Bills of account or invoices made out with this pencil can be copied the same as if copying ink was used. It is the handiest pencil on the market; you do not require a knife to keep it sharp; it is ever ready, ever safe, and just the thing to carry. Price of pencil, with box of leads complete, only 10c.; 3 for 25c.; one dozen 90c. postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



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### TRICK PUZZLE PURSE.

The first attempt usually made to open it, is to press down the little knob in the centre of purse, when a small needle runs out and stabs them in the finger, but does not open it. You can open it before their eyes and still they will be unable to open it. Price by mail, postpaid, 25c. each.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.



**APPEARING BILLIARD BALL.**—A solid billiard ball, beautifully made, can be made to appear in the bare hands with the sleeves rolled back to elbows. Very fine and easy to do. Price, 35c.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

### BUBBLER.



The greatest invention of the age. The box contains a blow-pipe of neatly enameled metal, and five tablets; also printed directions for playing numerous

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H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



**DEVILINE'S WHISTLE.**

Nickel plated and polished; it produces a near-piercing sound; large seller; illustration actual size. Price, 12c. by mail.

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Made of nicely colored wood 5 1/2 inches long. The power is furnished by rubber bands. Ten discs of cardboard with each pistol. Price, 6c. each, postpaid.

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The coin holder is attached to a ring made so as to fit anyone's finger. The holder clamps tightly a 25-cent piece. When the ring is placed on the finger with the coin showing on the palm of the hand and offered in change it cannot be picked up. A nice way to tip people. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

**THE HELLO PUZZLE**

Can you get the ring off? This puzzle is the latest creation of Yankee ingenuity. Apparently it is the easiest thing in the world to remove the ring from the block, but it takes hours of study to discover the trick, unless you know how it is done. Price by mail, postpaid, 10c.; 3 for 25c.

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**TRICK FAN.**

A lady's fan made of colored silk cloth. The fan may be used and then shut, and when it opens again, it falls in pieces; shut and open again and it is perfect, without a sign of a break. A great surprise for those not in the trick. Price, 35c. by mail, postpaid.

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The most remarkable trick-cigar in the world. It smokes without tobacco, and never gets smaller. Anyone can have a world of fun with it, especially if you smoke it in the presence of a person who dislikes the odor of tobacco. It looks exactly like a fine perfect, and the smoke is so real that it is bound to deceive the closest observer.

Price, 12c. each, postpaid.

C. BEHR, 150 W. 62d St., New York City.

**IMITATION CIGAR BUTT.**

It is made of a composition, exactly resembling a lighted cigar. The white ashes at the end and the imitation of tobacco-leaf being perfect. You can carelessly place it on top of the tablecloth or any other expensive piece of furniture, and await the result. After they see the joke everybody will have a good laugh. Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.

**TRICK CIGARETTE BOX.**

This one is a corker! Get a box right away, if you want to have a barrel of joy. Here's the secret: It looks like an ordinary red box of Turkish cigarettes. But it contains a trigger, under which you place a paper cap. Offer your friend a smoke and he raises the lid of the box. That explodes the cap, and if you are wise you will get out of sight with the box before he gets over thinking he was shot.

Price, 15c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

**NAIL PUZZLE.**

Made of 2 metal nails linked together. Keeps folks guessing; easy to take them apart when you know how. Directions with every one.

Price, 6c., postpaid.

WOLFF NOVELTY CO., 29 W. 26th St., N. Y.

**PIN MOUSE.**

It is made of cast metal and has the exact color, shape and size of a live mouse. Pinned on your or somebody else's clothes, will have a startling effect upon the spectators. The screaming fun had by this little novelty, especially in the presence of ladies, is more than can be imagined. If a cat happens to be there, there's no other fun to be compared with it.

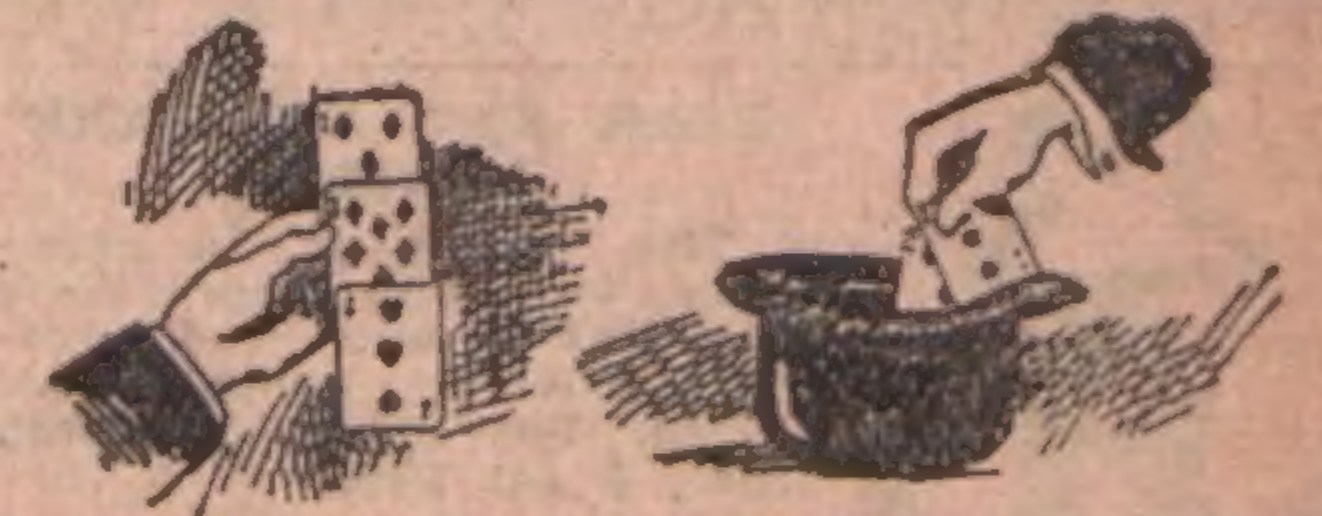
Price, 10c. each by mail, postpaid; 3 for 25c.

FRANK SMITH, 383 Lenox Ave., N. Y.

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A full pack of 52 cards, but by the aid of the instructions given, anyone can perform the most wonderful tricks. Many of the feats exhibited are truly marvelous and astonish, and amuse a whole audience. Positively no sleight-of-hand. The whole trick is in the cards. Price, by mail, postpaid, 35c.

H. F. LANG, 1815 Centre St., B'klyn, N. Y.



**THE DEVIL'S CARD TRICK.**—From three cards held in the hand anyone is asked to mentally select one. All three cards are placed in a hat and the performer removes first the two that the audience did not select and passing the hat to them their card has mysteriously vanished. A great climax; highly recommended. Price, 10c.

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